AMERICAN CERAMICS 4/3

November

MICHAEL GROSS

MICHAEL GROSS
"TEAPOT"

December

ARNOLD ZIMMERMAN

ARNOLD ZIMMERMAN: STUDIO

PAULA WINOKUR

"FIREPLACE", 1985
PORCELAIN, GLAZED; SLAB CONSTRUCTED, ASSEMBLED
COMMISSION: PRIVATE RESIDENCE, PHILADELPHIA
APPROXIMATE SIZE: 6'H. x 5'W. x 14"D.

COMMISSIONS INVITED

HELEN DRUTT

HELEN DRUTT GALLERY
1721 WALNUT STREET
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19103

(215) 735-1625

HOURS: WEDNESDAY — SATURDAY 11-5

Dorothy Weiss Gallery

Juta Savage
Recent Sculpture
and Works in Porcelain

November 5–November 30, 1985

Roseline Delisle
Recent Works in Porcelain
and Drawings

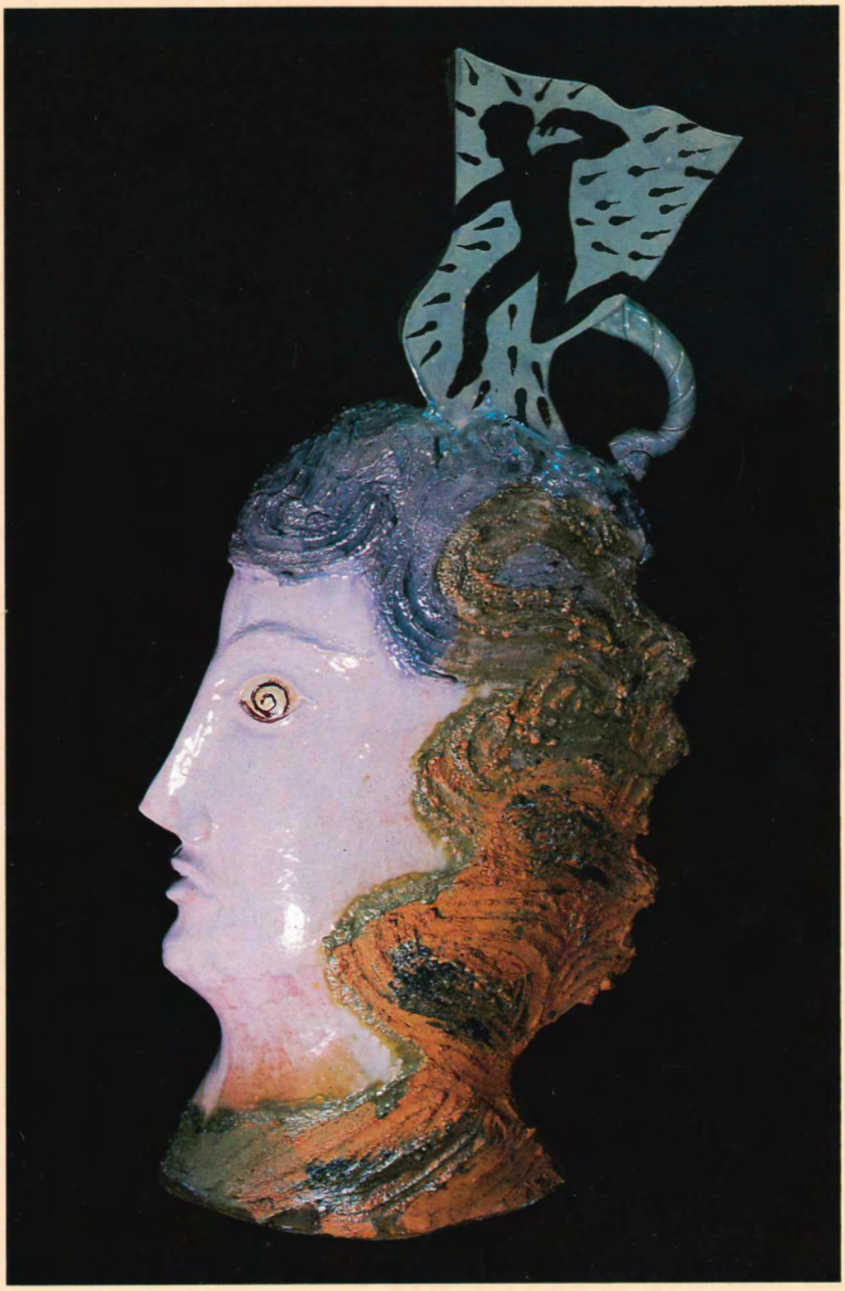
December 3, 1985–January 4, 1986

Juta Savage, The Dining Suite *(1985),*
39" x 38" x 41", porcelain, wood, acrylic, screen
Photo: Ben Blackwell

Roseline Deslisle, Serie Noire #29 *(1985),*
8¼" x 3¼", porcelain
Photo: Julie Mason

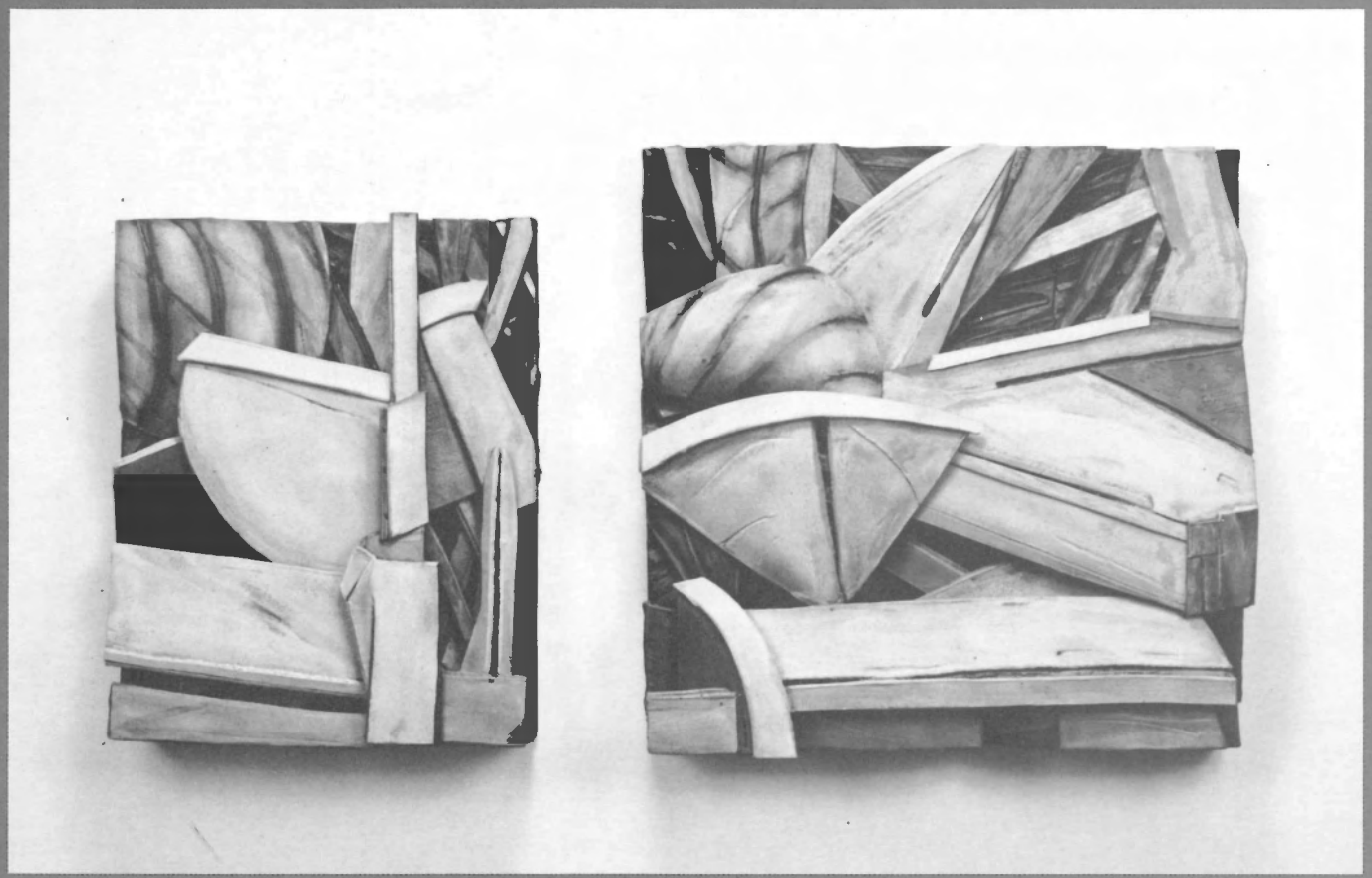
256 Sutter Street
San Francisco, CA 94108
415 397 3611

Steven Kemenyffy



The Floating Couple (1985),
4′ x 2′ x 1′, stoneware.

Represented by
Mindscape Gallery
300 West Superior
Chicago, Illinois
60610
312 664 2660



Tonto's Dance
Wall Sculpture,
Stoneware with
High and Low
Temperature Glazes,
32"H. x 61"W. x 9"D.

KEN VAVREK

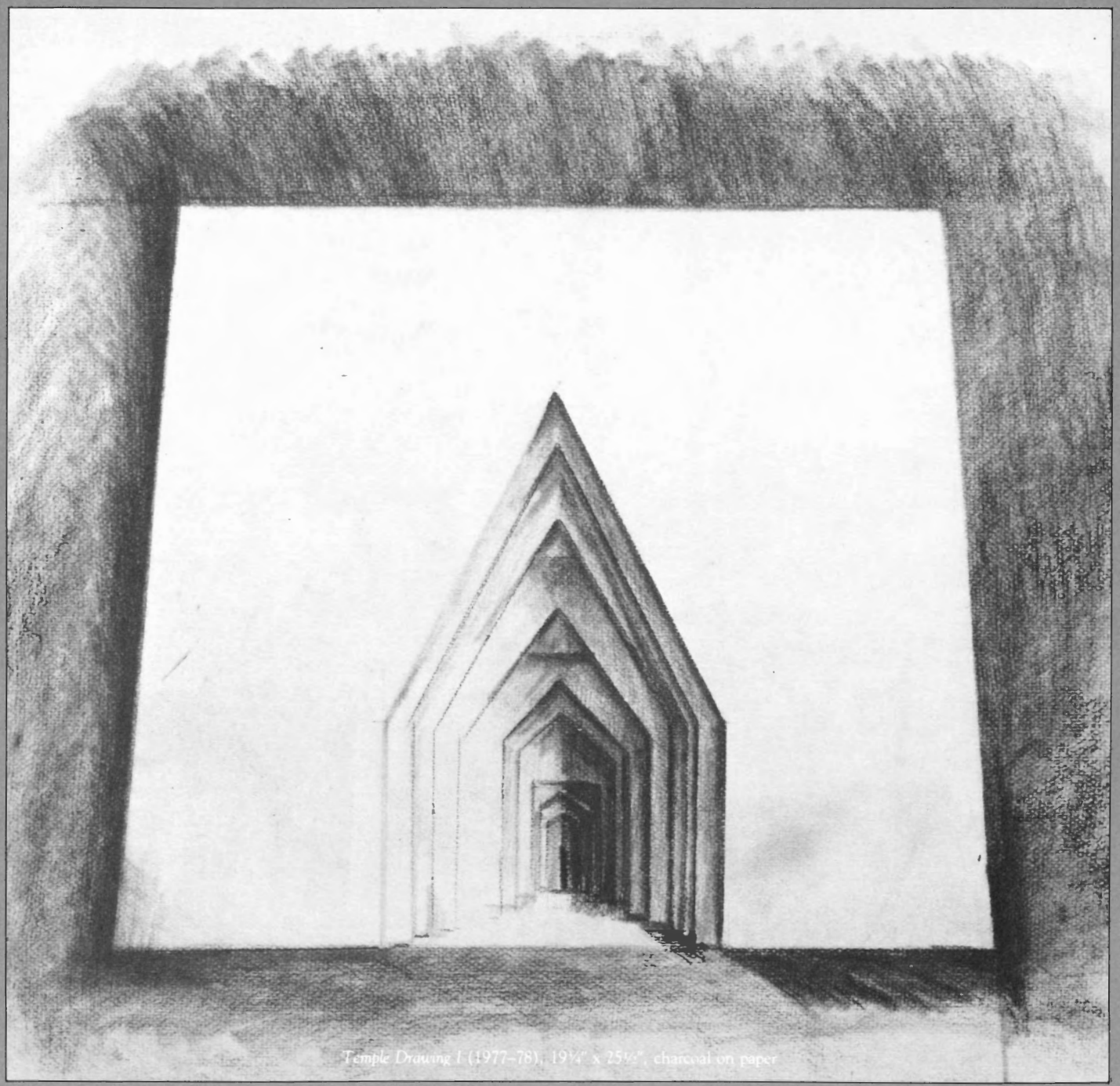
Recent Work

November 10 to
November 30, 1985

ROSENFELD GALLERY
113 Arch Street
Philadelphia, Pa. 19106
215 922-1376

William Wyman

Sculptures and Drawings



Temple Drawing I (1977–78), 19¼" x 25½", charcoal on paper

Maria Friedrich

By appointment only 718 438 3040

Christina Bertoni
Mary Jo Bole
Dennis Gallagher
Arthur González
Jan Holcomb
Michael Lucero
Judy Moonelis
Ron Nagle
Arlene Shechet
Nancy Smith
Peter VandenBerge
Peter Voulkos

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(Cover) Detail of Hatch, Hatch *by Cliff Garten (1984), ceramic vases and ceramic tile. Photo: Rik Sferra.*

PROFILE

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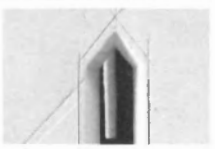

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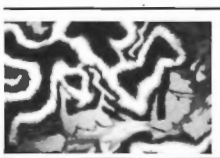

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Architectural Clay/ Clay in Architecture

Mary Roehm
January 7–24

Jane Hartsook Gallery
Greenwich House Pottery
16 Jones Street
New York, New York 10014
212-242-4106

Detail Untitled *(1985)*
7½' tall, terracotta
Photo: Will Brown

Steve Reynolds

Lill Street Gallery
1021 West Lill Street
Chicago IL 60614
September 13–October 18

Lubbock Fine Arts Center
2600 Avenue P
Lubbock TX 79457
October 25–December 2

GARTH CLARK GALLERY

MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY CERAMIC ART

■

Forthcoming Exhibitions	New York	Los Angeles
November	Elsa Rady Henry Varnum Poor	Adrian Saxe
December	Carmen Collell Enzo Borgini	Rituals of Tea
January	Akio Takamori Henry Pim	Enzo Borgini Anna Silver
February	Hans Coper James Lawton	Phillip Maberry Jeff Oestreich

■

American
Rudy Autio
Ralph Bacerra
Lidya Buzio
Philip Cornelius
William Daley
Michael Duvall
Ken Ferguson
Frank Fleming
Chris Gustin
Jan Holcomb
Robert Kibler
Anne Kraus
James Lawton
Roberta Marks
Beverly Mayeri
Art Nelson
Richard Notkin
Jerry Rothman
Judith Salomon
Adrian Saxe
Susan Shutt
Anna Silver
Chris Staley
Akio Takamori
Beatrice Wood
Betty Woodman

European
Tony Bennett
Enzo Borgini
Carmen Collell
Henry Pim
Alev Siesbye
Martin Smith

Modern Masters
Michael Cardew
Hans Coper
Maija Grotell
Bernard Leach
Glen Lukens
Keith Murray
Henry Varnum Poor
Lucie Rie
Peter Voulkos

■

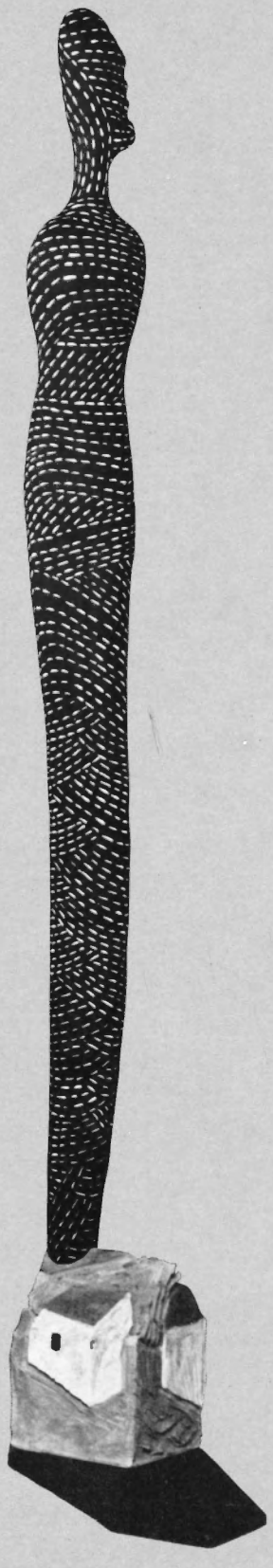
New York: 24 West 57th Street, NY 10019 (212) 246-2205
Los Angeles: 170 S. La Brea Avenue, CA 90036 (213) 939-2189
Kansas City: By Appointment Only—Telephone (816) 753-5299
London: By Appointment Only—Telephone (01) 359-4111

Rudy Autio
Jim Leedy
Peter Voulkos

Ceramics, Prints & Drawings
December 6–January 10

Leedy/Voulkos Gallery
1919 Wyandotte
Kansas City, Missouri
64108
816 474-1919

ESTHER SAKS GALLERY



Ceramic Sculpture
Christine Federighi
Indira Freitas Johnson

October 18–November 19

Philip Cornelius
New Work

November 22–January 4

Possibly Functional
All Media Exhibit
Including Carolyn Morris Bach, David Bacharach, Jamie Bennett, Michael Corney, Eddie Dominguez, Paul Dresang, Ken Ferguson, Pat Garrett, Karen Karnes, Joyce Scott, Anne Smith, Osvaldo Valdes

November 22–January 4

Above: Philip Cornelius, *Automaru*, 21" x 12" x 4".
Left: Christine Federighi, *Night Drifting* (1985), 56" x 9" x 17".
Photo by John Sullivan.

311 West Superior Street • Chicago IL • 60610 • 312 751 0911

ORGANIC ABSTRACTION

November 20, 1985
to January 4, 1986

Christina Bertoni
Ruth Duckworth
Grace Knowlton
Graham Marks
Ron Nagle
Ken Price
Jan Roesel
John Roloff
Virginia Scotchie
Arlene Shechet

Guest Curator
Maria Friedrich

Detail: *Cocoon*
Arlene Shechet
26" x 11" x 8"
Courtesy Bess Cutler Gallery
Photo: Pelka/Noble

Perimeter Gallery

356 West Huron Street
Chicago, Illinois 60610
312-266-8303

Martha Schneider Gallery

2055 Green Bay Road
Highland Park IL 60035
(312) 433 4420

October 19
Charles Olson
David Williamson
New Work

November 23
Mayer Shachter
The Teapot as Jewel

CURTIS & SUZAN BENZLE

PORCELAIN / COLOR & LIGHT

Sandra Ainsley Artforms
55 Avenue Road
Toronto, Ontario M5R 3L2
416 968 8685

Samba (1985), 8" x 12" x 3", porcelain.
Photo by Benzle.

Contemporary Ceramics

For the Discerning Collector

Sandra Ainsley Artforms
Hazelton Lanes, 55 Avenue Road
Toronto, Ontario M5R 3L2
(416) 968-8685

America House Gallery
24 Washington Avenue
Tenafly, New Jersey 07670
(201) 569-2526

Clay and Fiber
North Pueblo Road
Taos, New Mexico 87571
(505) 758-8093

Departure Gallery
360 Amsterdam Avenue
New York, New York 10024
(212) 580-7454

Elements Gallery
14 Liberty Way
Greenwich, Connecticut 06830
(203) 661-0014

Gallery Eight
7464 Girard Avenue
La Jolla, California 92037
(619) 454-9781

Incorporated Gallery
1200 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10128
(212) 831-4466

Sheila Nussbaum Gallery
358 Millburn Avenue
Millburn, New Jersey 07041
(201) 467-1720

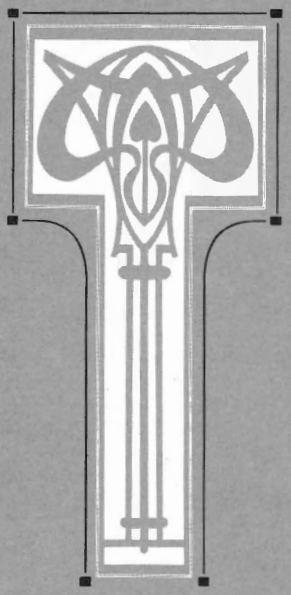
The Private Collection
21 East 5 Street
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202
(513) 381-1667

Swan Gallery
8433 Germantown Avenue
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19118
(215) 242-5300

Swan Gallery
132 South 18 Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103
(215) 568-9898

Venture Gallery
28235 Southfield Road
Lathrup, Michigan 48076
(313) 552-1151

American Art Potters



Kenneth Beittell ▪ Rick Dillingham
William Grueby ▪ William Fulper
Otto & Vivika Heino ▪ Jens Jensen
Karen Karnes ▪ Phillip Maberry
▪ Gertrude & Otto Natzler ▪
George E. Ohr ▪ William Pitney
Mary Roehm ▪ Christopher Staley
Toshiko Takaezu ▪ Arnold Zimmerman

GeorgeCiscleGallery

1006 Morton Street Baltimore, MD 21201 Tel: 301·837·2787

The Vessel in Context
Cliff Garten's Paired Vases

Nancy Roth

Spiral, Vase *(1984), 112½" x 46½" x 9¾",*
ceramic vases and ceramic tile/acrylic. Photo:
Rik Sferra.

Ceramics has a natural and ancient bond to architecture, a logical affinity rooted in a common concern with space. Ceramic surfaces, such as mosaic patterns of Roman, Byzantine, or Islamic origin, have long been an integral part of the definition and decoration of architectural spaces. Ceramic vessels served as centerpieces of landscaped vistas in eighteenth-century parks and gardens (notably at Versailles) and as the summation of the interior design plans of many centuries. By echoing their solidity or delicacy, proportions, colors, or materials, these vessels could serve either to introduce or sum up important aspects of much larger three-dimensional settings. The architectural dimension of the vessel is, in fact, relatively familiar as a self-centering image that commands and orders the space around it.

Cliff Garten's work, however, proceeds from a radical rethinking, a near inversion, of the vessel-as-architecture metaphor. Architectural space here becomes a vessel—a container of people, objects, activities. Of the objects and settings Garten cites to illustrate his idea, the large, vessel-shaped granaries made by peoples living along the Niger River in West Africa offer perhaps the clearest example. In contrast to such literal vessellike structures, Garten's spaces employ an abstracted vision of the vessel that is closer to a set of values—coherence, clarity, functionality, centeredness—than to a physical model. In a series of works entitled "Paired Vases," Garten has begun, simply, to build the vessel into a context. In these richly colored, luxurious works, the vases, though not literally functional, clearly refer to functionality. The surrounding context—though not an actual, three-dimensional space—refers to the space in which a vessel is seen. The work, in short, places the vessel at the focal point of an exploration of space, color, and composition. But more significantly, "Paired Vases" provides a format for stepping outside the vessel itself and looking back at it, for considering questions of aesthetic value, historical style, functionality, and, above all, for examining ways in which a vessel can—or could—be perceived.

For a variety of reasons, "Paired Vases" has the look of an important beginning, the first installment in a large body—perhaps a lifetime—of work. From the simple expedient of pairing, of introducing two vessels of equal size, shape, and color, a strong formal relationship arises. The presence of two things precisely the same automatically moves the image out of the arena of an isolated, individual, idiosyncratic work of art and into the realm of deliberately ordered, collective space—that is, of architecture. Especially in light of their relatively large scale, Garten's vases readily recall the paired objects that have traditionally flanked entrances to significant structures around the world: lions and sphinxes in the ancient world, the Nio guardians of Japan, actual vessels in many homes and palaces. They serve to guard or guide or instruct those who pass the boundary into a new space. Pursuing the idea a step further, Garten mounts the vases in front of the wall and builds paired, flat surfaces behind them, in most cases also of ceramic, thus completing a formal architectural statement involving space, surface, and proportion. The format suggests a deliberately constructed, ordered space, yet remains infinitely flexible in its mood, scope, message.

Perhaps the ubiquitous gateway image, culminating in the *St. Louis Doorway* that concludes the series, signifies a rite of passage and the beginning of an important investigation for Garten. Even more persuasive are the systematic, logical connections that tie one work to the next, making the series seem like a progression, so many steps in a thorough exploration of the paired-vase image. The symmetrical structure, the roughly human scale, the issues of vessel-in-space, two versus three dimensions, and tangible versus illusory space—all seem deeply rooted in Garten's imagination.

Garten came close to choosing architecture as a career, but the immediacy and tactility of clay proved a stronger attraction. He determined to become a potter, studying at Alfred University (B.F.A., 1974) and later at the Rhode Island School of Design (M.F.A., 1978). During graduate school, he sought the limits of the ceramic vessel—at one point making loose basket forms of clay and fabric and, after completing his degree work, isolating this "woven" surface from the vessel altogether and hanging it flat on the wall. In time, however, the vessel form reasserted itself, but in a more abstracted form. In a series of walls that enclosed elongated oval shapes, extending from both the wall and the floor, Garten began to explore the issues of positive and negative space, vessel walls as boundaries of space, and to some extent, two- as opposed to three- dimensional art.[1]

In the meantime, a series of travel experiences were shaping his ideas and opening new avenues of investigation. In 1978, he was chosen to accompany a group of curators and historians on a study tour of the English country house, its architecture and interior décor. On the trip he saw, among other things, vessels carefully integrated into a variety of settings—as exterior ornaments, entryway markers, mantelpieces, cabinets, and sidetable fixtures. He began to see the underlying structures of decorative schemes, and to think about the vessel's role as a marker and a delineator of space. Another decisive and much earlier influence was his memory of the Berkshire manse he visited often as a child. Over the course of several years, his uncle and a close friend restored the dwelling to its original, eighteenth-century appearance. The way in which first the spaces, then the colors, textures, and appointments came to reflect an earlier pattern of living made a lasting impression on Garten. It gave him an opportunity to observe how particular objects were connected to and determined by the space around them.

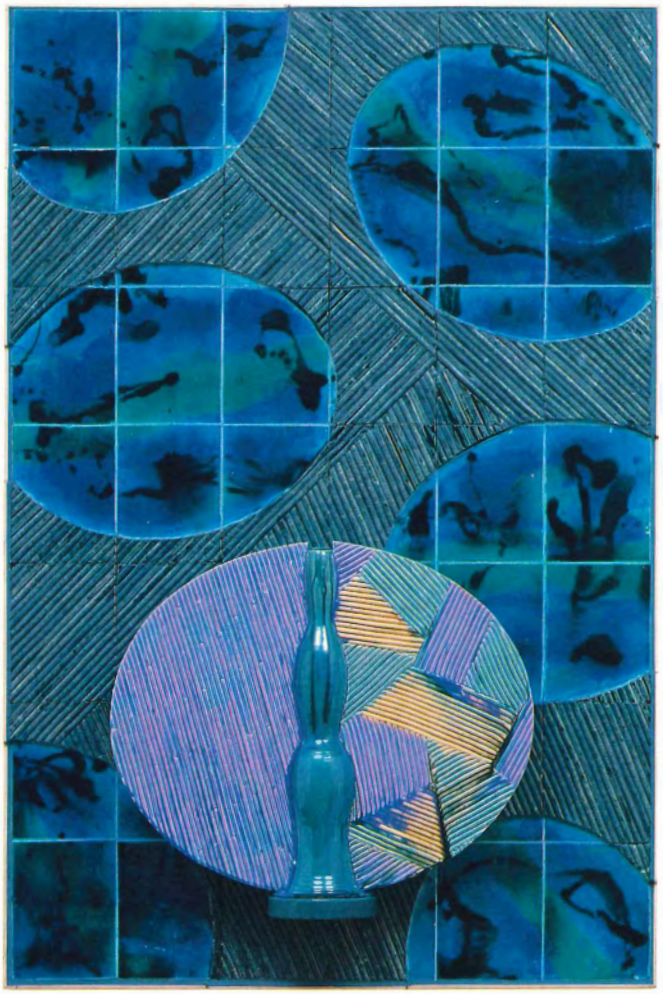
As an adult, there were trips to Greece in 1979, where Mediterranean light and reflectivity offered fresh insights into space and color, and to Italy, where great architecture, especially that of Florence, conveyed a new appreciation of how bold and grand a building could be.

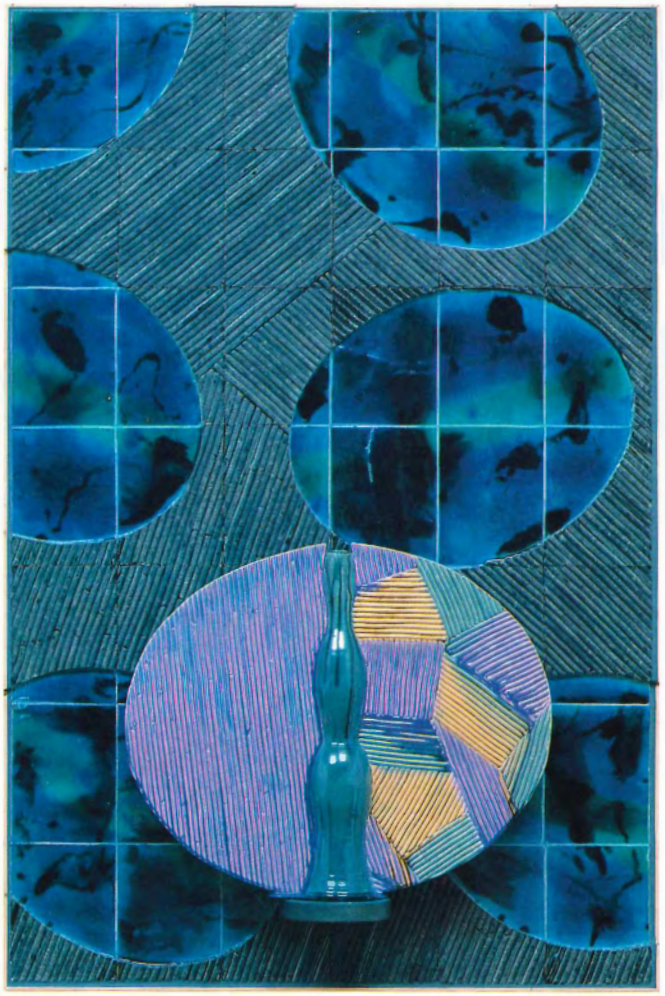
Shortly thereafter, Garten began constructing the first work in this new series, *Model for a Belvedere* (1982–84). (A belvedere is similar in scope and setting to a gazebo, except that the former ordinarily commands some notable vista). This model, built on a one- sixth scale, chronicles Garten's travels and serves as the outline for a very large project still in progress. Here, and in the pieces that followed in rapid succession, a pair of vases is the starting point. In the *Belvedere* they are a deep blue green, and proportionally very large (at full scale, they would be over five feet high). The work is strictly symmetrical and employs a regular rhythm of squared and rounded forms. The grid pattern—small in the floor section, larger in the lines of blue green tiles that articulate the wall surfaces—contributes to an overall feeling of rigidity, tempered only slightly by the buoyant blue green, pink, and lilac color scheme and the light falling through the open-beamed roof. Like a period room in a museum, the *Belvedere* conveys a sense of extreme control. It is a setting generated at one remove, through the filter of theory. It is a harmonious, sensually gratifying, intellectually challenging setting. It could perhaps be studied with profit, or used as the stage for some musical or theatrical performance; it looks too perfect to live in.

Unlike the *Belvedere*, which spins out the entire image of a building in miniature form, the other Paired Vases are full size, accompanied only by their immediate backdrop. These works are, if not fragments, then distillations or emblems of entire, full-scale buildings. With each work competing for the entire space, the recent gallery installation at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design became highly problematical. Garten's most successful solution involved the use of a baffle shaped like a post-and-lintel doorway. The two halves of *Paired Vases* took up the sides of this structure; between them the *Belvedere* was visible. The arrangement successfully implied the works' ultimate spatial demands: the pairs of vases mark an axis of symmetry, ordinarily the site of an entrance; the backdrops behind the vases stand for full environments.

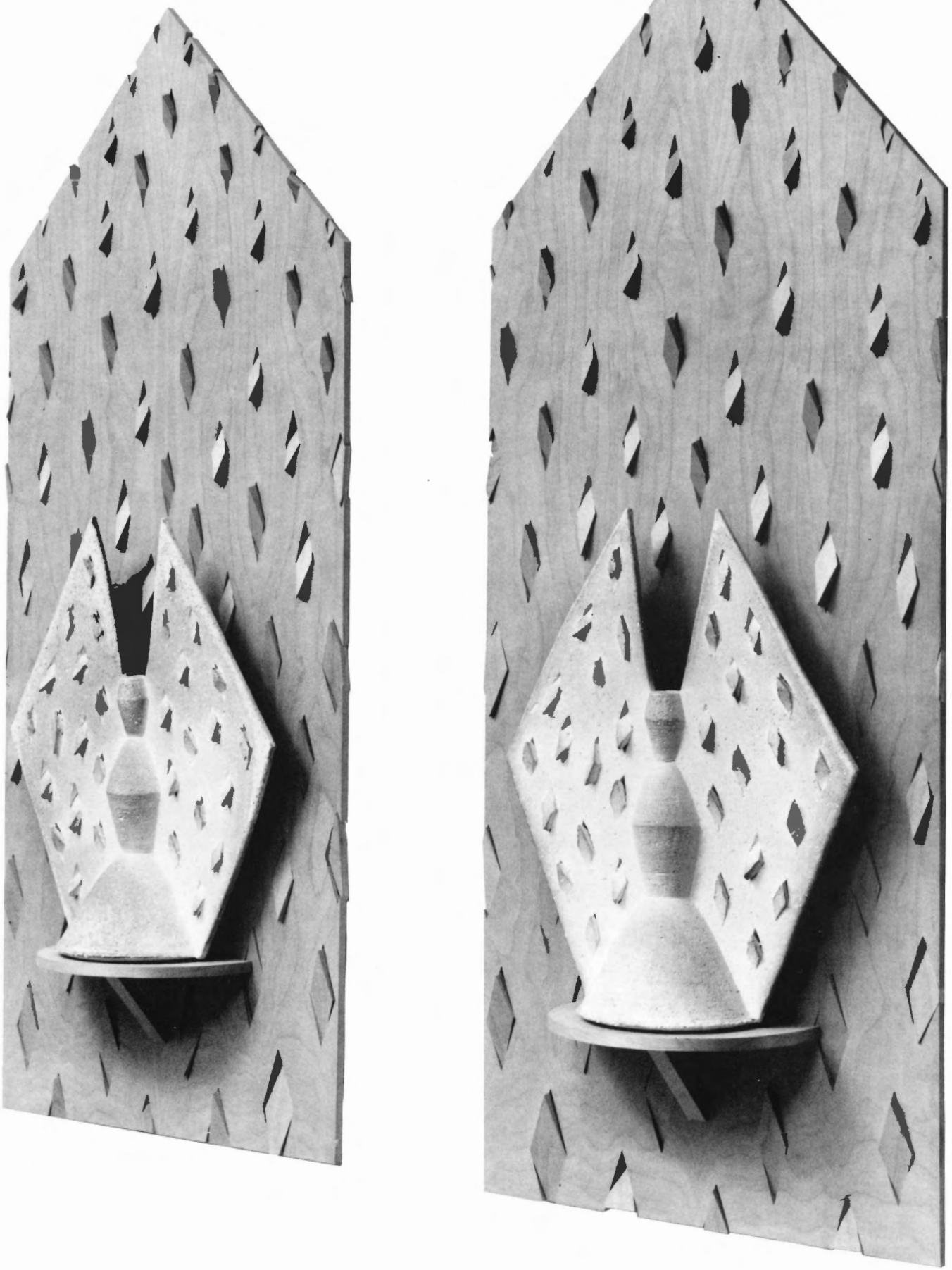
Named for the stoic heroine of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, the first full-scale piece in the series, *Hester, Hester* (1982), is striking in its austerity. It conspicuously lacks the opulent, sensuous quality that marks so much of Garten's work. As if observing a rite of abstinence at the outset of an important creative venture, he seems to be speculating how much he can do without: the vases are simple in shape and solid; color shifts subtly from orange to beige to white; contrasts are at a minimum. The symmetry is severe, the religious overtones—a Gothic prickliness of pattern and a rigid, hierarchical composition—pronounced. Like Gregorian chant, the work achieves a hypnotic effect through the repetition of a few simple

Hatch, Hatch *(1984), 67½" x 41½" x 10¼", ceramic vases and ceramic tile. Photo: Rik Sferra.*





Hester, Hester *(1982), 77" x 86" x 11⅛", fumed porcelain vases, birch plywood. Photo: Rik Sferra.*



elements, keeping variations within a very small range. And like a liturgical piece, composed to function within a particular ceremonial time and space, the vessel in this case harmonizes smoothly with its setting. In *Hester*, as in all the Paired Vases, the vessel is the focal point; but here it stands out by *not* contrasting, *not* presenting any conflict. It recalls the kind of vessel that "functions" aesthetically, like a chalice, whose appearance is governed by its ritual significance. For whether the ritual vessel is simple or ornate, its distinguishing mark is its appropriateness to the meanings, the symbolic weight assigned in context. *Hester*, in short, presents the "space" of the ritual vessel. It implies the physical architectural space of church or temple. But more broadly, it sketches the perceptual space, the spirit of concord, humility, and faith, in which a ritual vessel must appear in order to be fully, accurately seen.

In sharp contrast to *Hester's* reflective calm, a slightly later work, *Suez Triangle*, bristles with extraverted energy. Contrasts abound: a somewhat discordant juxtaposition of robust green and an equally forceful purple jump out against a white wall; jagged shapes jut out sharply from the sides of the vases and a second layer of sharp angles—extending from the wooden backdrops—heighten the sense of frenzied activity. The jagged forms seem to point to electrical imagery, to lightning bolts or other high-static charge. The *Suez* vessels, unlike *Hester's*, assert themselves within the setting. There is friction and a strong tension in the straight, sharp lines. These vases do not acquiesce, but strive to conquer, to dominate the space in which they are set.

With these first two settings, one pared down, contemplative, detached, the other full of explosive energy, Garten has disclosed the ground rules and the general direction the series will take. For as much as these works vary in tone and mood, they all depend on one crucial relationship: vessel to vertical surface. The match between vessel and backdrop or, in more abstract terms, between the three-dimensional form and the two- dimensional surface behind it, carries the fundamental tension in this work, and it is through this one formal relationship that Garten addresses, from varying perspectives, the broad question of the vessel in context.

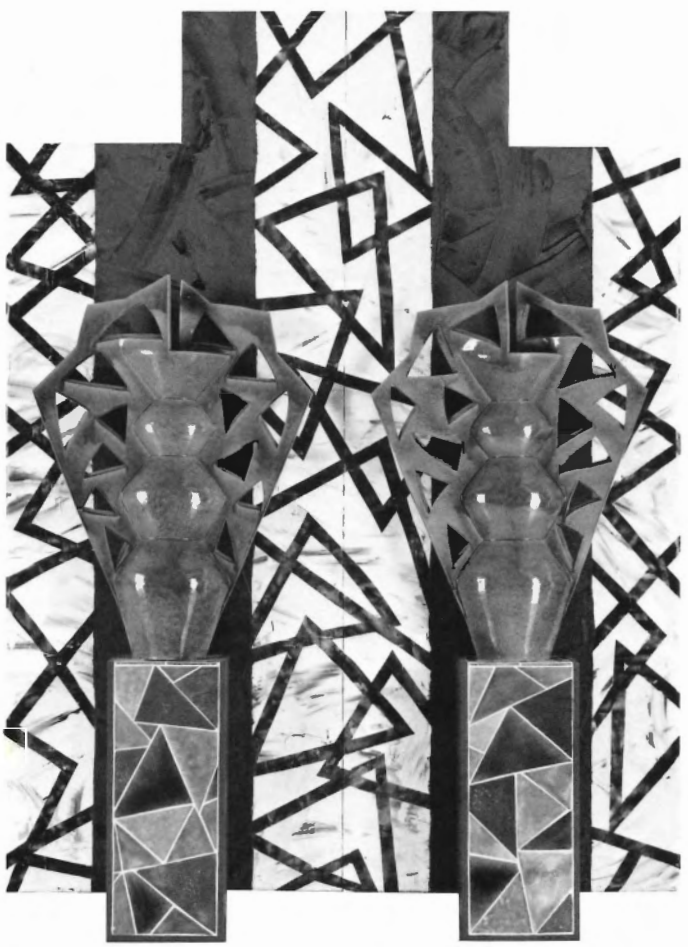
In a subsequent work, *Hatch, Hatch*, Garten begins to work more intently on the surface image than before and, perhaps as a not entirely intentional consequence, begins to address some painterly concerns. The notion of grid, for example, is a nearly ubiquitous theme in twentieth-century painting.[2] It can serve, as Rosalind Kraus has pointed out, either as a sign for infinity, a space stretching out in any direction, or as a way of dividing space into uniform, easily mastered parts. For Garten, as for any ceramic artist fabricating a large, continuous, flat surface, the grid is also the simplest, most familiar solution to an imposing set of technical problems. As such, it almost inevitably denotes functionality when it appears in a larger context. Garten usually camouflages the grid pattern by butting the square ceramic tiles up against one another as tightly as possible and by running continuous swaths of color and texture across the divisions. In *Hatch, Hatch*, however, the flat surface carries a much more complex image. Several large, blocky ellipses, constructed of squares grouped together and thus obviously gridded, float against a darker background built of jagged, grooved puzzle pieces. Here the grid has become the subject of an ironic comment: the organic egg shape contains the functional grid image; the larger, seemingly inorganic surface does not.

Hatch, Hatch is the only Paired Vase in which the flat surface seems to hold precedence over the vase, that is, where the vase is formed to suit it, and not the other way around. The vessel here seems subordinate and all but overpowered by the complexities surrounding it. Through a formal device (the wing extensions are built out into an ellipse), Garten has linked the vase to the ellipses in the background "painting," and so allied the vessel with the organic form. Yet in this case the organic egg image also carries the functionality of the grid. *Hatch, Hatch*, in short, seems to discharge such tensions as literal versus metaphorical "function" and fine versus applied art, which currently surround and even partially obscure the ceramic vessel.

Significantly, the piece bears a strong resemblance to certain contemporary paintings. Jennifer Bartlett's works entitled *At*

Model for a Belvedere *(1982–1984), 37½" x 51½" x 66½", ceramic, wood, stucco, acrylic. Photo: Rik Sferra.*

Suez Triangle *(1984), 106" x 81" x 14", ceramic vases, ceramic tile, acrylic on wood. Photo: Rik Sferra.*



Aleutions *(1984), 78½" x 77½" x 9¼", ceramic vases and ceramic tile. Photo: Rik Sferra.*

Sea, Japan for example, particularly the large painting now installed at Keio University, Tokyo, adopt much of the same imagery. Bartlett's ellipse shapes are mounted with an appearance of randomness against a vast grid, with waves of changing color suggesting times of day. Essentially a rendering of an abstraction—time—it has no decisive boundaries. No one passage is its center or its limit. Garten's image, by contrast, is closely, hierarchically ordered: the center lies between two sensuously beautiful vases that take up the most favored, most prominent position. These paired forms are neither identical nor quite mirror images of one another, but resemble more closely the right and left sides of an organic form—symbiotic, integrated, mutually dependent. And, however recent Garten's technique may be, there is an inescapable ancient symbolism in the ceramic "earth" material in the background, and the "human" vessel form placed in front of it, made of the same stuff, yet existing in an altogether different—here, three-dimensional—plane. Particularly in contrast to Bartlett's nonjudgmental chronicle, Garten's firm order seems to take a position, to offer a reconciliation between the opposing forces he has called up. Here, by setting the organic, human value embodied in the vessel form at the center, Garten is able to subordinate the issue of functional or nonfunctional, abstract or referential, and offer both vessel and viewer a new, more comprehensive perceptual setting.

The same firm sense of order prevails in *Spiral Vase* (1984) as well, but here it seems more natural, obvious, inevitable. The tall, sinuous vases are fitted with thin, undulating handles that sweep out in wide arcs. The two spirals in the background, dark waves of green and blue "capped" with a light amber at intervals, confirm and expand a feeling of broad, sweeping circular motion. Along the seam between the two sections of background—this time not separated by any space—is a perfectly flat, symmetrical form that repeats the color, shape, and scale of the three-dimensional vases. In this work, the various concerns articulated independently elsewhere—two and three dimensions, vase-shaped surface and flat surface, inside and outside—are more happily blended than ever before. The entire work is dominated by a feeling of smooth, spiral motion...not very fast, perhaps, but steady, the kind of motion one might associate with tidal ebb and flow or stellar systems. *Spiral Vase* seems, in fact, to be a statement about a vast, mysterious, natural order. The combination of cosmic and human references—in this case, vessels—recalls much earlier attempts to visually communicate the idea of a comprehensive world order. Especially toward the end of the seventeenth century, as natural philosophers faced a growing tension between older alchemical wisdom and the tenets of early modern science, remarkable pictures appeared. Employing scientific observations and alchemical symbolism, as well as religious dogma, these pictures expressed the wholesome balance ordained on high and reflected in human affairs. These "world pictures" often employ the alchemical sign of the human body, or more specifically the psyche,[3] as a vessel. This human symbol then links earthly with heavenly spheres in an all- encompassing, divinely ordained order. *Spiral Vase* is decidedly more modest in its aims. Yet there is something of the same urge to express a rational order in the world, a will to link nature to art, and human to cosmic events.

Such a systematizing spirit—that puts human beings at the center of things and defines the space around them as reflections of them, arranged for their pleasure, enhancement, or instruction—is the very stuff of Renaissance humanism. Its image, arising in the late Middle Ages as an expression of clear, abstract theory, gradually gained substance and more sensuous, ambiguous expression through the Baroque period, until Enlightenment thinkers began again to question man's centrality in the greater scheme of things. The evolution of Garten's Paired Vases—from the cool detachment of the *Belvedere* to the flowing lines and lush color of the last work, *St. Louis Doorway*, traces an analogous path. The *Doorway* has come full circle, pushing against the limitations of the symbolic, schematic paired-vase format toward the *Belvedere's* complete, this time full-scale, elaboration in space. The *Doorway* is by far the most literal work in the series; whereas the others must be "imagined" into three dimensions, it can actually be walked into, passed through. It is in some ways the most arresting, certainly the most overtly sensual of the Paired Vases. This impact, however, is purchased at the price of the sparkling, concentrated symbolic energy that animated other works. In the *Belvedere*, the vessel was a museum piece, an object of intellectual contemplation; in *Hester*, it was ritual; in *Suez Triangle*, assertive; in *Hatch, Hatch*, an aesthetic abstraction; in *Spiral Vase*, a human being. *St. Louis Doorway* comes the closest to being not a symbol of a space, but an actual space. Garten's metaphorical exploration of the vessel in context ends, logically enough, where space is least symbolic, most literally architectural.

As much as it concludes the Paired Vases investigation, *St. Louis Doorway* suggests that Garten is heading toward a more literal exploration of the architecture-as-vessel idea that originally prompted the series. Such considerations must remain speculative. But even without unfair second-guessing about the artist's future direction, some general aspects of the current work seem relevant to full-scale architectural space. Garten's notion of architecture-as- vessel is, in its way, as provocative and far-reaching a metaphor as Le Corbusier's famous description of a house as a "machine for living." In contrasting "machine" with "vessel" as an architectural idea, in fact, it becomes somewhat easier to see how, and how far, the vessel model might lead an architect away from those Constructivist ideals that until very recently dominated modern architecture. There is some common ground, to be sure. In the vocabulary of the vessel, as in that of the machine, function is critical. And the instinct for coherence, reaching down to the smallest detail, remains in force. But there is in the vessel—and certainly in Garten's work—a sensuousness of color and texture, a baroque emotional appeal, and above all an organic wholeness that shares nothing with a machine.

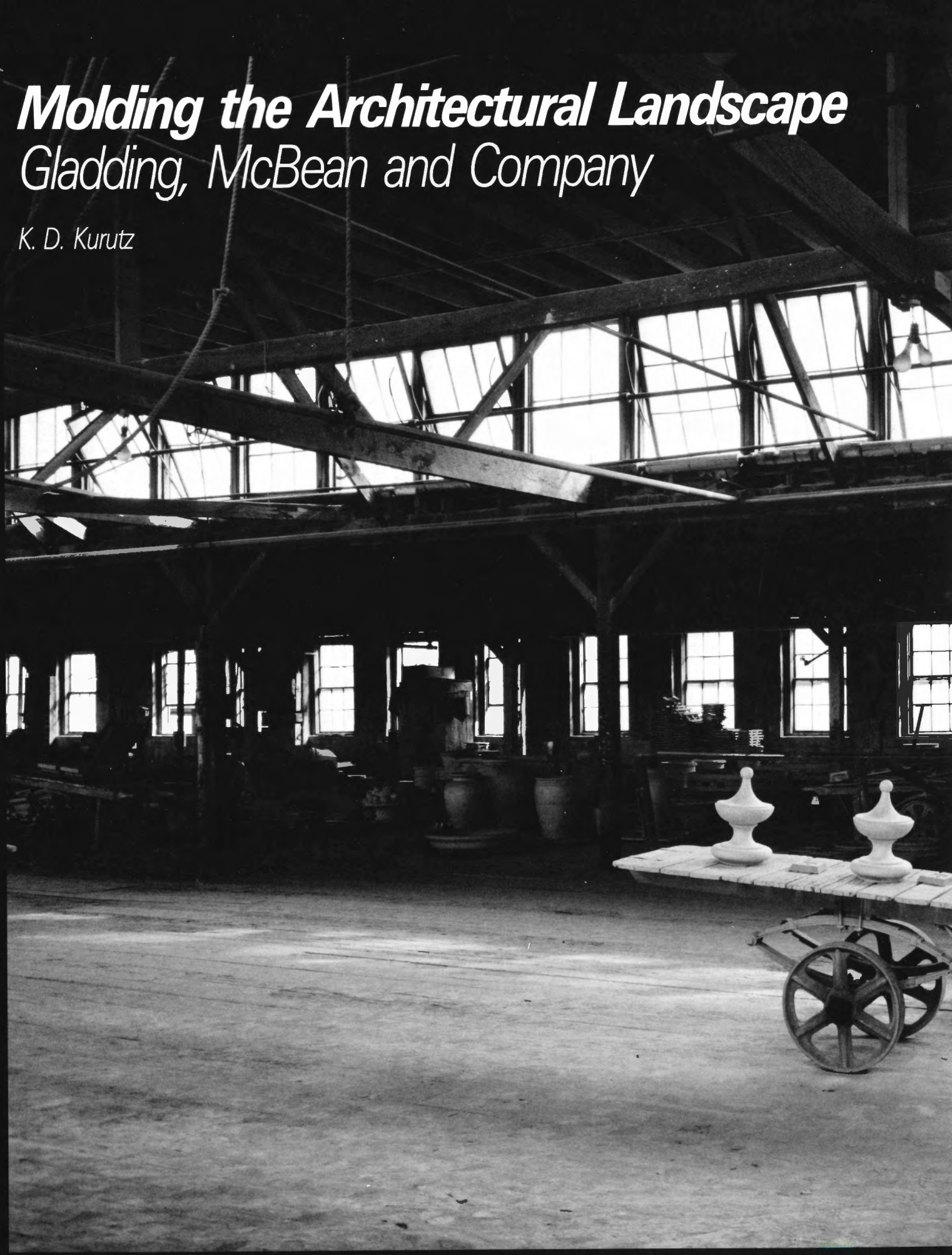
The machine, for one thing, presents a thoroughly democratic metaphor, a purposive union of equal, exchangeable parts. It is economical, even parsimonious of time and materials, commonly held resources. It is essentially ascetic, placing no special value on sensuous enjoyment. It tries to be suprapersonal and ahistorical, making no references or value judgments beyond those of its own function. The vessel's function and meaning, by contrast, depend on a fixed relationship among parts, a hierarchy of sorts. Nor is the ceramic vessel, in an industrial age, any longer a precisely efficient solution to a design problem. Rather, it is one that admits to other values as well: color and sheen, visual enjoyment generally, association with other times, spaces, people. Garten's work in particular is in no sense economical; on the contrary, it represents a lavish expenditure of time and effort in the service of an aesthetic, much more than a functional goal. The investigation of the vessel as an architectural metaphor, in short, has led him to a series of images rich in humanistic values and references. They largely reject the modular interchangeability of parts that emerged from the machine ideal, and adopt instead a strongly ordered, instantly graspable division of space. They reject a spartan economy of means for an unapologetic delight in beautiful materials, colors, lines. His vessel-centered spaces are human in scale and formal logic. But more than this, they address the human capacity to perceive colors and surfaces with pleasure, to grasp the nature of a space through formal language, to sense the personality and faith of an individual architect, and to desire in one's surroundings a statement of something shared, the values of a human community.

1. For a discussion of these, see: Robb Mitchell, "Cliff Garten," *American Ceramics*, vol. 1, no. 1.
2. See Rosalind Kraus, "Grids," *October* 9, Summer 1979.
3. See C. G. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy* (Princeton, New Jersey: Bollingen, 1974).

Cliff Garten, head of ceramics at Hamline University, St. Paul, Minnesota, was featured in a solo exhibition at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design this year and in the exhibit, "Architectural Ceramics: Eight Concepts," organized by Michael Rubin for Washington University Gallery of Art, St. Louis, where it premiered at the annual NCECA conference before traveling to the American Craft Museum, New York.
Since finishing a curatorial internship at Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Nancy Roth has written art commentary and criticism for the New Art Examiner, Artpaper, *and* Canadian Art.

Molding the Architectural Landscape
Gladding, McBean and Company

K. D. Kurutz



Altar Cart (Glazing Room), *gelatin silver print. Photo: Mary Swisher.*

During the second half of the nineteenth century, hundreds of thousands of people migrated west to exploit the mineral riches and commercial potential of the young state of California. Lured first by the sparkle of gold along the banks of the American River and later by promises of "health, wealth, and sunshine," they were responsible for the state's phenomenal growth in population and in commerce. Although the discovery of gold created this surge, there was ample business for those interested in other types of excavation as well. Among these were three enterprising men from Chicago—Gladding, McBean, and Chamberlain—who located one of the richest white clay deposits in the country, fifty miles from Sacramento in the small town of Lincoln. By the end of its first year, their mining and manufacturing operation had shipped ten tons of clay drainage pipe to San Francisco. Such was the beginning of Gladding, McBean and Company, which today is known worldwide for its fired clay products and, more importantly, as the only major source of architectural terra cotta in the United States.

Terra cotta as a building material or embellishment enjoys a lengthy architectural heritage. Used first by the Babylonians and Etruscans, it was revived during the Renaissance and again in mid–nineteenth-century England. Its popularity in the United States began during the late nineteenth century with the development of modern architecture and steel-framed construction. Terra cotta proved to be the most practical sheathing material for the earliest "skyscrapers." To meet this new demand, Gladding McBean diversified its products from drainage pipe to terra-cotta roof tiles, building façades, and architectural sculpture. They supplied the roof tiles for Stanford University as well as terra-cotta embellishments for the Mills Building, one of the oldest surviving structures in San Francisco. Due to the ability of terra cotta to withstand heat and impact, Gladding McBean's business in that city soared in the aftermath of the 1906 fire and earthquake. The company's list of projects during those boom years is a veritable "who's who" of well-known buildings, including façades and ornamentation for the *Los Angeles Times*, *San Francisco Examiner*, *Sacramento Bee*, San Francisco's Pacific Gas and Electric Building and Pacific Telephone Building, and San Quentin's prison, as well as embellishment for the private dwellings of publishers, politicians, and movie moguls. Stylistically, terra cotta could assume the wide range of tastes characteristic of this eclectic period: the heavy, mysterious shapes of ancient Mayan friezes, the crisp formality of Greek pilasters, the intricacies of Gothic gargoyles, or the sleek lines of early Art Deco. It could also assume the appearance and texture of other building materials—sandstone, granite, or metal—by a variety of glazing techniques. The terra-cotta façade of the California State Library in Sacramento, for example, appears to be granite; that of the Tadich Grill in San Francisco appears to be bronze.

The surge of architectural activity did not continue, however. With the onset of the

Plaster Deer Head (Modeling Room), *gelatin silver print. Photo: Mary Swisher.*

Plaster Capital (Fireman's Fund Insurance Building), *ca. 1914, San Francisco, gelatin silver print. Photo: Mary Swisher.*

Great Depression, most construction came to a halt and Gladding McBean suffered serious financial losses. By the beginning of World War II, many sections of the factory had been shut down. When the economy did revive a few years later, the popularity of terra cotta had waned, to be replaced by more modern and economical materials such as aluminum, precast granite, and glass. But Gladding McBean has weathered the climate of architectural tastes and finances; today, the company name and products are recognized far beyond the borders of California. Gladding McBean has benefited from an increase in high-quality building projects and is also involved in the restoration of important structures all over the world. The terra cotta being used to restore Carnegie Hall and Chicago's Wrigley Building, for example, bears the Gladding McBean name.

A recent company catalogue carries a phrase that stands out from the complicated diagrams and measurements: "Our stock shapes enable the designer to create unlimited cornice profiles." This simple statement exemplifies both the sturdy foundation of the company in stock products and its potentially unlimited contributions to preserving and inspiring the built environment. Its role in stimulating urban growth in the West is also a social and architectural contribution to history. Within the hushed atmosphere of soft clay dust, the company's 238-acre property today stands as a kind of time capsule enriched and renewed by the vitality of its workers.

Artist/photographer Mary Swisher discovered the dedicated, almost cloistered inner life of Gladding McBean when she first visited the factory in 1981. Attempting to capture its poetic qualities through the lens of her camera, she took her first photograph in the office of Ernest Kadel, formerly the chief sculptor. There, she found negatives hung to dry, a coat suspended from a hook, and shoes resting near his desk, all of which had remained there, in neglect and tribute, since the day Kadel died in the late fifties. Swisher had first visited Gladding McBean in pursuit of another project, a survey of early twentieth-century commercial photography in the Sacramento Valley. She and her colleague, Nikki Pahl, examined a collection of eight thousand glass-plate negatives—virtually locked away since World War II—documenting all clay models for the company's architectural projects. On a subsequent visit, Swisher explored the curious array of relics that lay everywhere: the familiar RCA Victor logo with dog, a stag's head leaning against a wall, a series of cherubic faces. Her aesthetic response to this cache of incredible visual images was separate from her historical interest in the glass-plate negative collection. Her purpose as a photographer was artistically motivated; she wanted to capture the essence of the place, not to systematically document each room, each process, or each relic.

Her images capture more than the taste and feel of the fine dust in the glazing room, the searing heat of the kiln rooms, and the cool moistness of the molding rooms. They also reveal the human, aesthetic, and spiritual qualities that uniquely define this century-old company—from the intense, dark vibration of enormous beehive kilns to the solemn, two-wheeled carts filling the light-flooded glazing room.

The story of Gladding McBean is a vivid chapter within the larger narrative of California's pioneer progress and the curious development of modern architecture. It is a story as monumental as the giant clay pipes and discarded Corinthian capitals of bygone eras and as personal as the lives of its staff, all of them artists in their own right. It is as simple as the universal desire for shelter and embellishment, drawn from the "stock shapes" and "unlimited profiles" of fired clay pipes and terra-cotta tiles.

K. D. Kurutz is curator of education at the Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento, California. In 1984, she curated the exhibition, "A Pottery: Photographs of Gladding, McBean and Company," comprising this current series of photographs by Mary Swisher. Swisher's experience there prompted the pottery to engage her as archivist for their collection of 10,000 glass-plate negatives, which will be used as a reference for architects and scholars. The photographer will be featured at Lightwork Gallery, Sacramento, this coming April. All photographs copyright Mary Swisher.

Lucca Della Robbia Plaster Frieze (Modeling Room), *gelatin silver print. Photo: Mary Swisher.*

Ernest Kadel's Office, *gelatin silver print.*
Photo: Mary Swisher.

Witness the Spirit of William Wyman

Susan J. Montgomery

As at every other place, one may come to pray to God at Chartres since He is everywhere. But one may come here also to contemplate man, who is revealed here in his genius and who, in that aspect, is not everywhere.[1]
Auguste Rodin

Like Rodin, William Wyman was interested in the often anonymous, creative genius of mankind, especially when that talent was directed toward spiritual expression. Wyman explored visual sensations that generate feelings of inexplicable spirituality, rather than dogmatic responses accorded particular deities or religious practices. Inspired by several disparate architectural experiences, including Chartres Cathedral, Wyman's Temple series of 1977 to 1979 culminated a distinguished artistic career.

Spiritual content was the final manifestation of the direct, personal contact Wyman had sought with his audience since his early days as a production potter. Production work was not merely functional for him. His pieces had to initiate a "warm, personal communication" between potter and user through their visual appearance, tactile quality, and suitability for use. Wyman's pottery coexisted with his more purely sculptural work for many years, each tempering the other. In the sculpture, too, he insisted on a function: sharing ideas and values with the viewer. For him, art did not exist for its own sake:

Who cares about [my] personal aesthetics and emotions? That's very one-sided and selfish...the sculpture must work on an emotional level and on a visual, sensual plane. If a person comes in contact with the sculpture he will, hopefully, be changed for the better, as one would through personal contact with someone who has something valuable to communicate. Things like love, joy, peace, sharing, all sound stupid, but are nonetheless there.[2]

Wyman's appetite for timeless beauty and eternal values—love, joy, peace, sharing—was satisfied by various unrelated

Stele for Omar Khayám *(1962), stoneware. Photo: Marie Cosindas.*

Temple 4 *(1977), 23" x 12" x 13", lowfire white clay, pastel. Collection John and Lenore Tracy. Photo: Greg Heins.*

examples of spiritual architecture. To call it *religious* architecture in this context would be misleading; Wyman's interests lay not in the religious precepts represented by Gothic cathedrals or Mayan ruins, but in the human experience of those structures and spaces and, most importantly, in the spiritual impulses that inspired their creation and are celebrated in their endurance. He had studied the great religions and philosophies of the world, both Eastern and Western, seeking a shared, essential truth beneath the ritualistic trappings. That study had led him to read widely— from the *Rubáiyát* of Omar Khayám to the poetry of New England's Robert Frost—and to explore manmade memorials to religious faith in Europe and South America.

In 1965, Wyman spent three months in Honduras as a consultant for the Agency for International Development on a project intended to foster native potteries. On his way home, he stopped near the western border of Honduras to visit the ruins at Copan, a ceremonial center of the Mayan religion. Excavated in the late 1930s, Copan now stands as a tribute to the artistic and engineering genius of a highly sophisticated civilization that flourished until the Spanish Conquest in 1515. Copan, a religious center of the Classic Period (A.D. 200–900), was a formal, controlled environment intended for worship and celebration, rather than a residential city. Elevated temples, plazas, and terraces were designed to create formal processional routes and vistas, and were highlighted by commemorative stelae and grand staircases. The meaning of these structures may never by fully understood, and that certainly is part of their mysterious appeal, but even today, isolated from its religious context, Copan is no ordinary place, any more than is Stonehenge or the Parthenon.

The year after his return from Central America, Wyman completed a slab construction entitled *Requerdos de Copan* (Memories of Copan). Its surface is divided into small rectangles of glazed decoration, reminiscent of the panels of hieroglyphics and carving Wyman had seen on the buildings and stelae at Copan. The stele as a form had interested Wyman several years before his trip to Copan, however; his first slab- built, flat-sided vases date from about 1960. These vases evolved into formal rectangles that served as freestanding surfaces for the most direct kind of communication—the written word. In 1962, Wyman inscribed the following stanza of the *Rubáiyát* on a slab construction entitled *Stele for Omar Khayám*:

The moving finger writes; and, having writ,
Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it

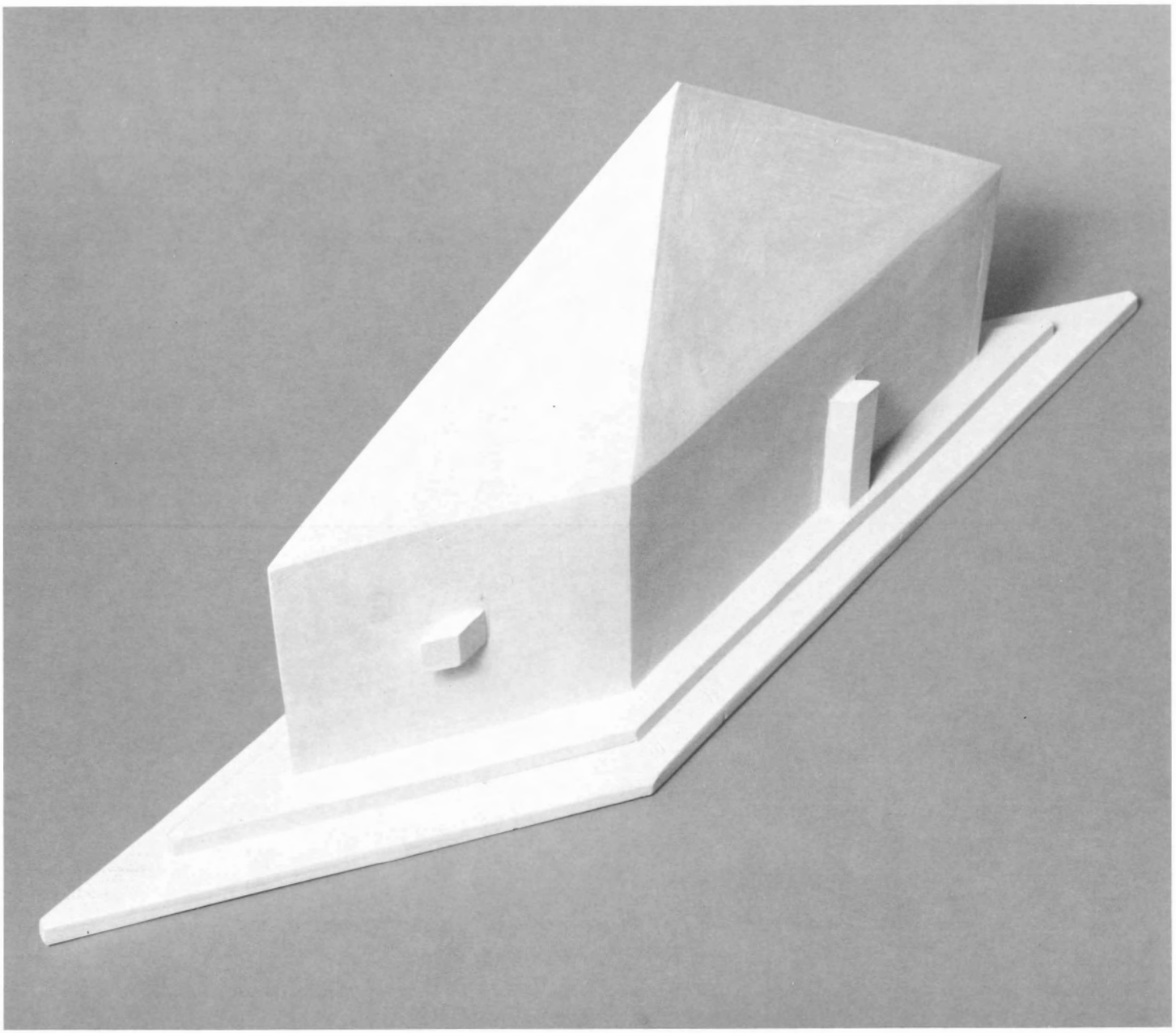
For these early slabs, Wyman used quotations from great writers and philosophers—brief lessons in philosophy that provide a glimpse into his own sense of truth. Wyman's sculpture during the turbulent sixties reflects his efforts to find something of value in a world where so

much seemed to be flawed, to sort out reality from illusion. In these tombstonelike slabs, Wyman honors the writer as much as the words, recognizing each one in his titles. Implying kinship with these writers, Wyman allows his work to become, quite literally, the vessel through which their thoughts are expressed. Ancient philosophy proves to be valuable still: Khayám's twelfth-century fatalism is a warning to Wyman's audience more than eight hundred years later that their actions are inexorable. The stelae at Copan, covered with hieroglyphics even more ancient than Khayám's poetry, must have struck a familiar chord for Wyman. Just as on the abandoned stelae, the words themselves become a permanent part of the slabs' surfaces. Stamped, scribbled, printed, and scrawled in the clay, they verify that a human hand and mind are at work and will, and like those words written by Khayám's Moving Finger, remain forever unchanged. In an era of rebellion against the mediocre shallowness of life in America, Wyman exerts his artistic individuality while reminding us of an eternal wisdom. Several other stelae from the early 1960s, including *Homage to Robert Frost* (1961), bear lines of verse Wyman selected for their philosophical points of view. He must have appreciated the tragic irony of Frost's bittersweet epigram about the end of the world, as he scratched it into the surface of the stele:

Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.
From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.
But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice.

During this phase of Wyman's career, political and philosophical themes dominated his work. The possibility of nuclear annihilation, the Civil Rights Movement, the assassination of President Kennedy—all had a powerful impact on Wyman and were manifested in his sculpture, often with explicit, verbal references. Gradually, Wyman's work became more introspective—less related to specific current events and more involved with personal philosophy. The inscrutable spirituality of the *Temple* series is the result of this long-term struggle to come to terms with his experience.

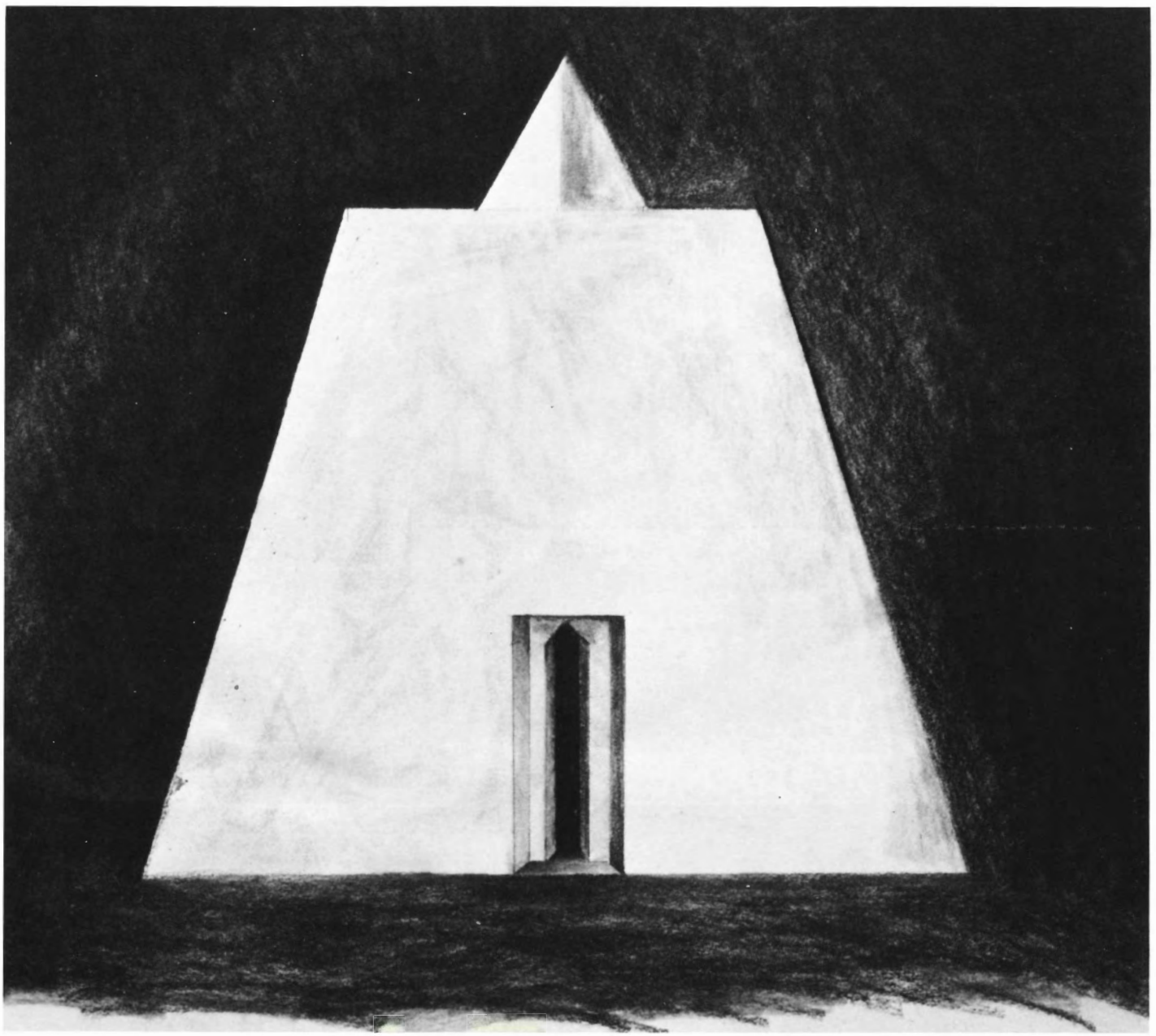
Gesture and spontaneous movement on the clay's surface have been key aesthetic elements in Wyman's work since the 1960s. Writing directly on the clay provided the means for melding the content of the poetry, the shape of the stele, and the immediate presence of the artist himself, as if he were writing a letter, a "warm, personal communication," to the viewer. In the mid-sixties, gesture determined form in the starkly emotional, upraised fist of the *Black Power* series. By 1977, gesture had retreated back to the surface of the clay, again as Wyman explored alternatives to glazing. He had drawn on white lowfire clay,



Temple Illusion 19 *(1978), 31" x 14" x 6", lowfire white clay. Collection Marilyn Pappas. Photo: Greg Heins.*

Ball Court, *Copan, Honduras, after repair ca. 1941. Peabody Museum, Harvard University. Photo: Carnegie Institute of Washington.*

Temple Drawing IV *(1977), 12" x 17", charcoal on paper. Courtesy Maria Friedrich.*

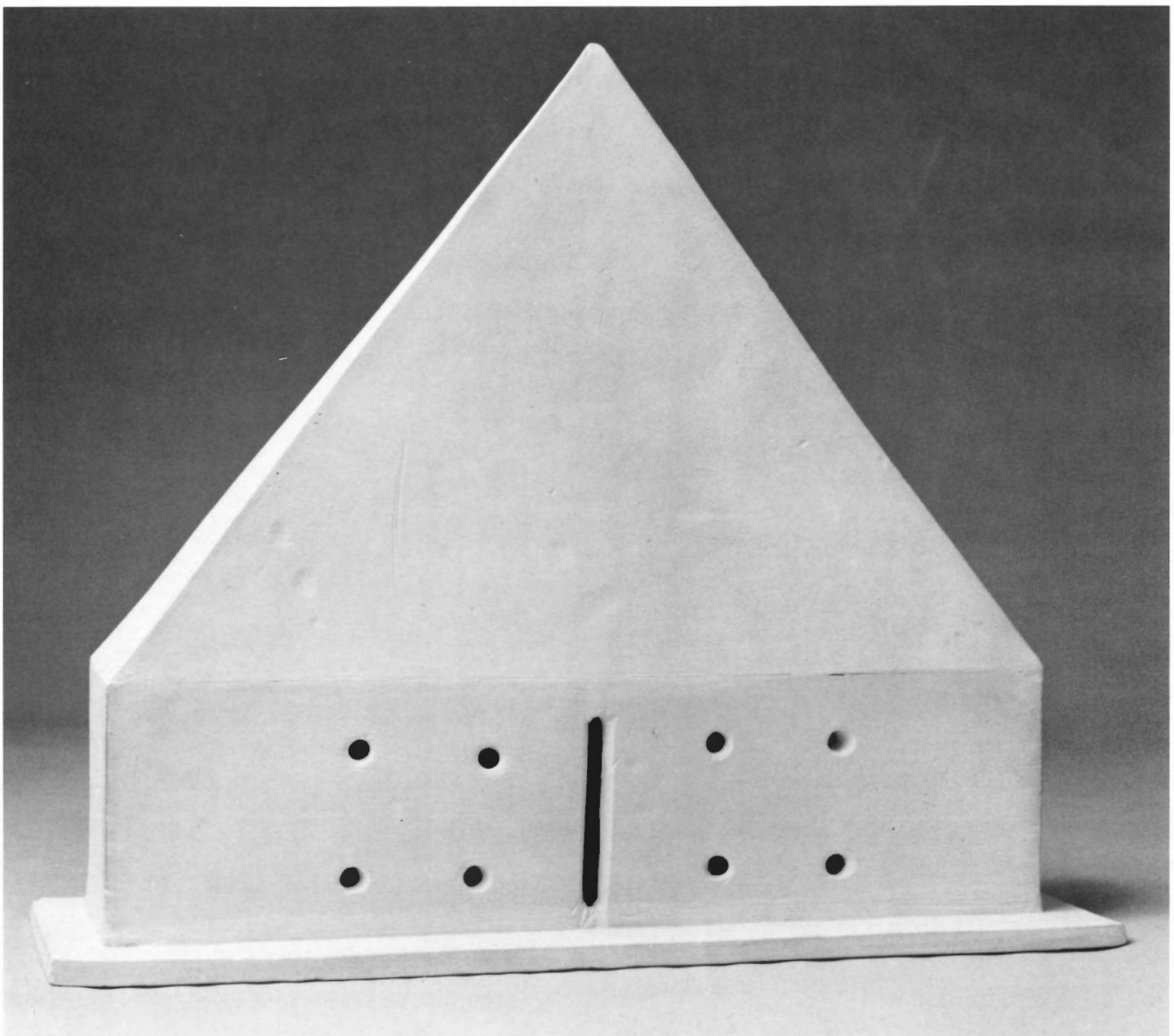


and now considered applying for a Ford Foundation grant to study the effect of pastels, conté crayon, watercolor, stain, and acrylic on various clay bodies in his search for an appropriate surface finish for the series of Temples he had begun six months earlier.

The work has been sculptural in nature, but the surfaces have [also] been very important and very subtle. They are arrived at in the making stages of the piece: form and surface finished at the same time, except for color. Glazing would interfere with the subtle relationship between surface and shape.[3]

The relationship between form and surface is, indeed, subtle. Wrinkles, creases, scratches, and hollows all accept color differently, producing surfaces that imply the weathering of great age while simultaneously revealing the hand of the artist, just as writing did on the slabs. Color is carefully selected. The blue of *Temple 16* was chosen "for spiritual reasons," according to Wyman, who wanted "just the right blue tonations so it will pulsate, slow with an ethereal blue light."[4] Even those Temples that were left the natural white color of the clay rely on nooks, slits, cutouts, and projections for subtle control of light and dark. These intentional variations are the visual descendants of the written words of more than fifteen years earlier.

Light itself can be the subject of these Temples. Traveling in France and Italy in 1971, Wyman had been moved to tears by shafts of light slicing through the massive stone walls of the cathedral at Chartres and the Basilica of Sainte-Madeleine at Vézelay. In *Temple 5*, Wyman experimented with a focused beam of light himself: a tiny opening in the back wall projects a shaft of light onto the dark temple floor. In a span of only sixteen inches, the illusion of great distance is achieved—the length of a nave perhaps—while simultaneously denied by the actual physical dimensions of the *Temple*. This conflict between visual sensation and logical certainty, between illusion and reality, may be a key to understanding all such spiritual structures and spaces. Places of religious contemplation, celebration, and ritual often use scale and relationships of parts that are far different from the conventional architecture of a culture. The Gothic cathedral exaggerated verticality: the soaring of the human spirit in the presence of God, and the relative insignificance of mortals in the face of spiritual immortality. A deceptively simple circular arrangement of pillars, such as at Stonehenge, can beguile visitors with its magic. The temple city of Copan—its processional avenues, stepped ritual platforms, controlled vistas, and remote location—represents yet another approach to infusing the manmade with spiritual importance. With strict control, the designers and builders of all three places were able to realign human experience. None was accidental or natural. All was planned to disorient worshippers from the everyday world to another level of emotional, intuitive, and perhaps uncertain



experience. These are not places for people to feel "at home." They are intended to disrupt normality and inspire a sense of otherworldliness. Each, in its own way, is evidence of the human genius so admired by Rodin.

Wyman's Temples are unsettling and disconcerting in a similar way. Exterior and interior relationships are often in conflict, and scale is disrupted. Steps lead in neverending flights toward unattainable goals; openings that appear to be doors and windows are awesomely large or absurdly small for human scale. *Temple 16* is a fortress completely filled with stairs, allowing no headroom for the traveller and no visible goal or resting place. *Temple Illusion 19— Illusion* is the operative word, as it is in much of Wyman's sculpture—is a stretched-out parallelogram of solid masonry, projecting blocks instead of doors and windows, with no accessible interior space at all. He defined and redefined reality through words gleaned from philosophers and poets. At the end of his life, he was wise enough to realize that reality and illusion may be inextricably intertwined, and therein lies their fascination for humankind.

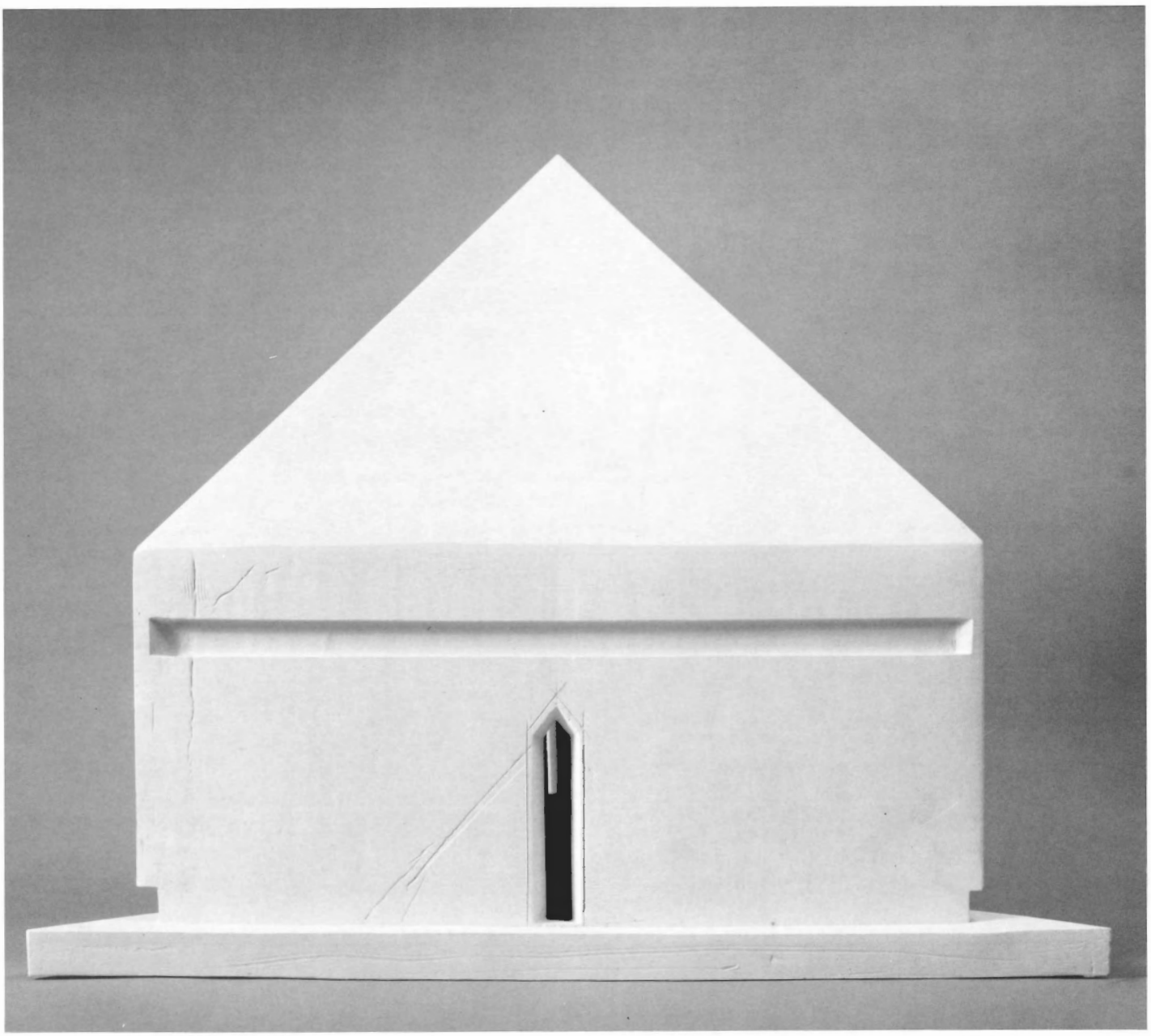
Access, or the lack of it, is also a key issue, suggesting the artist's personal efforts to "arrive" at answers to age-old questions concerning human communication. The Temples can be metaphors for isolation and receptivity, intellectual logic and visual perception, truth and illusion. Their meaning cannot be defined any more than can the meaning of Chartres or Copan, for they stand outside rational explanation. They are not merely miniature buildings, despite their physical dimensions. They exist completely in themselves, silently apart. Ambiguous and contradictory, they defy precise interpretation and remain elusive witnesses to the genius of the human imagination.

1. Auguste Rodin, *Cathedrals of France*, trans. Elizabeth Chase Geissbuhler (Redding Ridge, Conn.: Black Swan Books, 1981).
2. William Wyman, audio tape, 1977.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

Susan Montgomery is a freelance writer and Ph.D. Candidate in American and New England Studies at Boston University. *The author wishes to gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Marilyn Pappas, Pamela Hoss, and Greg Heins in the preparation of this article. Photograph copyrights are held by Greg Heins and Marie Cosindas.*

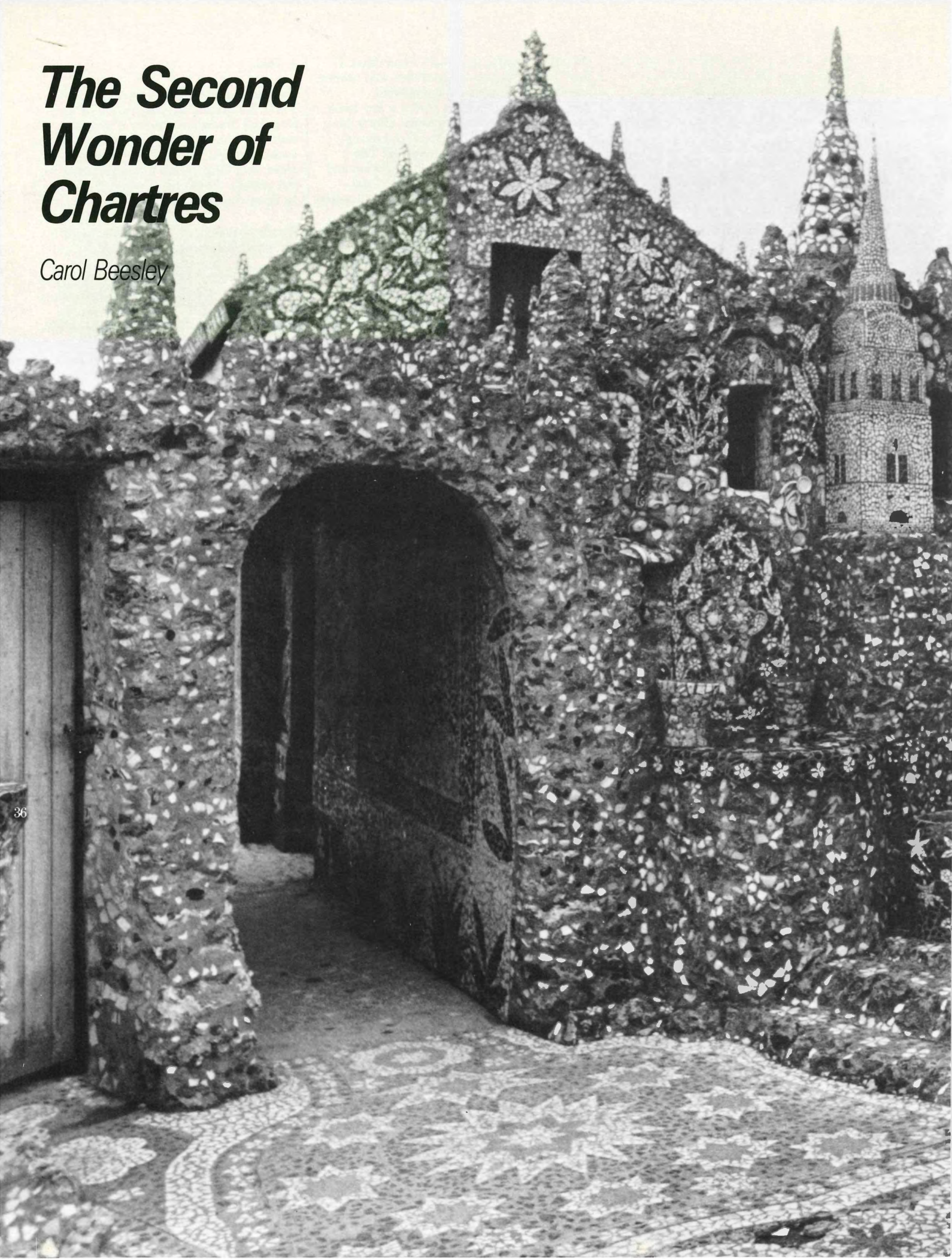
Temple 30 *(1979), 16½" x 19" x 5¾", lowfire white clay. Courtesy Maria Friedrich.*

Temple 8 *(1977), 31" x 15" x 25", lowfire white clay. Collection Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, NY. Gift of Friends and Students of William Wyman, 1980. Photo: Greg Heins.*

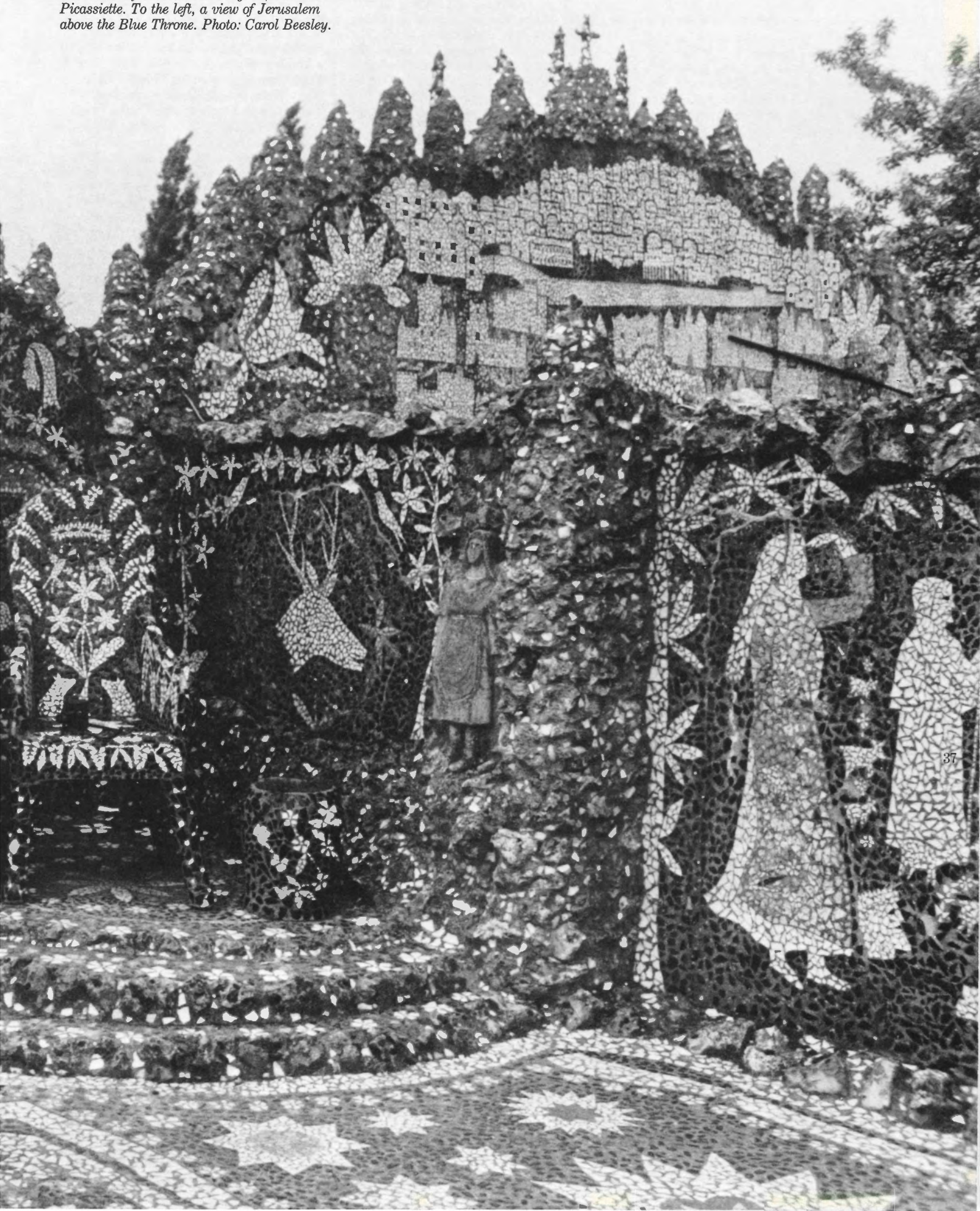


The Second Wonder of Chartres

Carol Beesley



North side of the Black Courtyard, Maison Picassiette. To the left, a view of Jerusalem above the Blue Throne. Photo: Carol Beesley.



Few visitors to the cathedral city of Chartres, ninety kilometers southeast of Paris, know of a small, colorful house on the Rue du Repos. This house was designed, built, and decorated with broken dishes, bottles, and other discards by Raymond Edouard Isidore, called "le Picassiette." The name is not easily translated. He is sometimes referred to as *pique-assiette*, which means "sponger," but this has evolved into *picassiette*: an idiom that roughly means one who experiences a serendipity—in Isidore's case, broken plates or *assiettes*. He died in 1964 and, until 1982, Madame Isidore lived in the house, opening regularly for visitors. Admission is by donation.

Arriving by train to go to Maison Picassiette, one must walk to the cathedral and down the hill to the right, across the Eure River and main highway, and up the hill again along the side wall and the back of the cemetery. Generally, Chartres Cathedral dominates the skyline on one hill; Maison Picassiette is on the other to the southeast.

Born on September 8, 1900, in Chartres, Raymond Isidore lived in his parents' home (his father died in 1910) until his marriage in 1924 to Adrienne Charlotte Dousset, a widow with three small children. He attended primary school for seven years and was apprenticed in 1913 as a moldmaker in a commercial foundry, where he worked until 1929. By that time he and his wife had managed to buy the property off the Rue du Repos, where he began construction of the main house. The family moved there in 1931. From that date until his death, he held a number of menial jobs, the last being caretaker of the cemetery. He spent the remainder of his hours in the realization of his dream.[1]

In a 1962 interview with Gilles Ehrmann, Isidore said he first[2] had the idea for decorating his home during its construction. As he walked down the street, he looked for "hazards"—debris of broken plates, porcelain, bits of glass, particularly the blue and black glass used by the pharmacist, which he picked up as he walked along. At first he heaped this debris in the garden, and then got the idea of embedding the broken pieces in the wet cement of the house as he built it. He began by decorating the interior of the house. The exterior followed, then the construction and decoration of the chapel, the summer room, the two thrones, and the Tomb of the Spirit. Before he finished, he had embellished the chairs, tables, and even his wife's sewing machine with bits of broken dishes and glass. One hundred and sixty flower pots are also covered with *assiettes!*

The house and garden are accessible only through a long passageway leading from the street, which until recently was clearly marked. At first glance, it is difficult to perceive the architecture and plan of the grounds. The property is long and narrow. Access to the various parts is laid out in a rectangle around the garden. The tiny entrance garden fronts the wall of the living quarters. These are one behind the other: only three of twenty parts of Isidore's master plan. The exterior path to the right of these rooms leads to the Black Courtyard. This open space is followed by the Chapel and a roofed foyer that opens onto the garden. In the garden, back sharply to the left, are the Blue Throne, the Tomb of the Spirit, and Isidore's workrooms.

The entire outside surface of the house, the walkway, and many of the other exterior walls are inlaid with small bits of broken dishes and glass. Motifs of butterflies, flowers, birds, scenes from the Bible, and different interior and exterior views of Chartres Cathedral, particularly the rose windows, are rendered in a variety of ways. The Mona Lisa, images from postcards such as Mont Saint-Michel, and romantic Algeria are also represented. A miniature, mosaic-covered Eiffel Tower, a mosaic bust of Pasteur, and numerous other small sculptures and arrangements of found objects fill the garden.

In the same interview with Ehrmann, when asked if he had an overall plan in mind, Isidore replied that he wished only to "make his world beautiful." As caretaker of the cemetery, he felt surrounded by death. In his world of beauty, "the spirit would live on after death." As to his inspiration, he claimed to be guided by a *force supérieure* who gave him commands, usually at night. When he awoke, he knew exactly where to place each piece of *assiette* in the wet cement.

The Black Courtyard, the Blue Throne, and the Blue Tomb of the Spirit are the only parts of Isidore's plan that are complex in theme. The Black Courtyard containing the Black Throne and the sepulcher, are associated by Isidore with the temporal. A miniature model of Chartres Cathedral sits atop the black sepulcher; above and on the edge of the skyline is a panoramic view of the city of Chartres. The Blue Throne and the Tomb of the Spirit, which he associates with the celestial, are on the other side of the wall from the living quarters and the Black Courtyard. The Blue Throne, inlaid with blue glass and white mosaics, is at the end of a long vista when seen from the back of the garden. A view of Jerusalem, similar in scale and treatment to that of the city of Chartres, surmounts the wall backing the Blue Throne. It is interesting to note that the unnamed planners of the thirteenth-century Cathedral had as one of their intentions to create "the heavenly Jerusalem." Isidore made good on their plans.

Access to the Tomb of the Spirit is on both sides of the Blue Throne. The ceiling and walls, predominantly executed in cobalt glass and white glazed porcelain, depict the Madonna, vases with flowers, a cow, and several donkeys. Isidore loved animals of all kinds and many photographs show him pictured with a favorite pet, usually a dog. Images of the Cathedral of Chartres abound, even on the roof; in the manner of mediaeval artisans, they cannot be seen by the earthbound. But the most frequently found motif is that of the flower. When asked about his images of nature, Isidore replied that paradise for him would be "covered with flowers, birds, and all that is beautiful." He created flowers in mosaics and painted masses of flowers on the walls and ceilings of the living quarters; he even decorated the family radio with painted flowers.

This simple but obsessive vision is typical in many ways of what the French call *art naïf* or *art brut* (Dubuffet's term). Isidore's motivations and motifs seem to be shared by a number of *architectes spontanés* as well: Ferdinand Cheval in his "Ideal Palace," Hauterives; Simon Rodia in his Watts Towers, Los Angeles; and Tressa Prisbey in her Bottle Village, Simi Valley. All of these artists used broken ceramics dishes and glass to some extent, Isidore and Rodia more than the others. The special character of each site is directly tied to what was commonly produced and available to ordinary people before the advent of Melmac. The records we have of what they had to say about their work are few, not too clear, often after-the-fact. The interview with Isidore took place two years before his death, when his "dream was realized," *and* after he had become fairly well known to the public, What all these artists seem to share is the human need for beautiful surroundings, which they make with what the rest of us throw away. Broken ceramic dishes continue to be one of the more popular building materials.

Isidore's working methods present the usual problems of preservation, the most difficult of which is preventing the public from removing the colorful mosaics. The painted murals on the exposed walls have all but disappeared. His quaint Mona Lisa and several other painted images, protected from the elements in the covered garden foyer, live on. The house and grounds, recently sold to the city of Chartres by Madame Isidore, now ninety-six, are supervised by a local civic organization. The sign on the Rue de Repos has been removed to dissuade the casual visitor. The garden is cared for in a very cursory way and lacks the crispness and detail that Madame Isidore gave it. The deterioration is pronounced since I first visited in 1977 but during my most recent visit, in May 1985, there was still much to see. If the ceramic images don't disappear through public disrespect, this will continue to be a special place to experience *le Picassiette's* earthly paradise.

1. All biographical information is from Maarten Kloos, *Le Paradis Terrestre de Picassiette*, (Paris: Encre Editions, 1979), pp. 91–92.

2. Gilles Ehrmann, *Les inspires et leur demeures*, (Paris: Ed. du Temps, 1962), pp. 39–42. For further reading: Bernard Lassus, *Jardin imaginaires*, Paris: Les Presses de la Connaissance, 8, ill., 1977; J. Lacarriere, J. Verroust, *Les inspires du bord des routes*, Paris: Ed. du Sieul, 1978.

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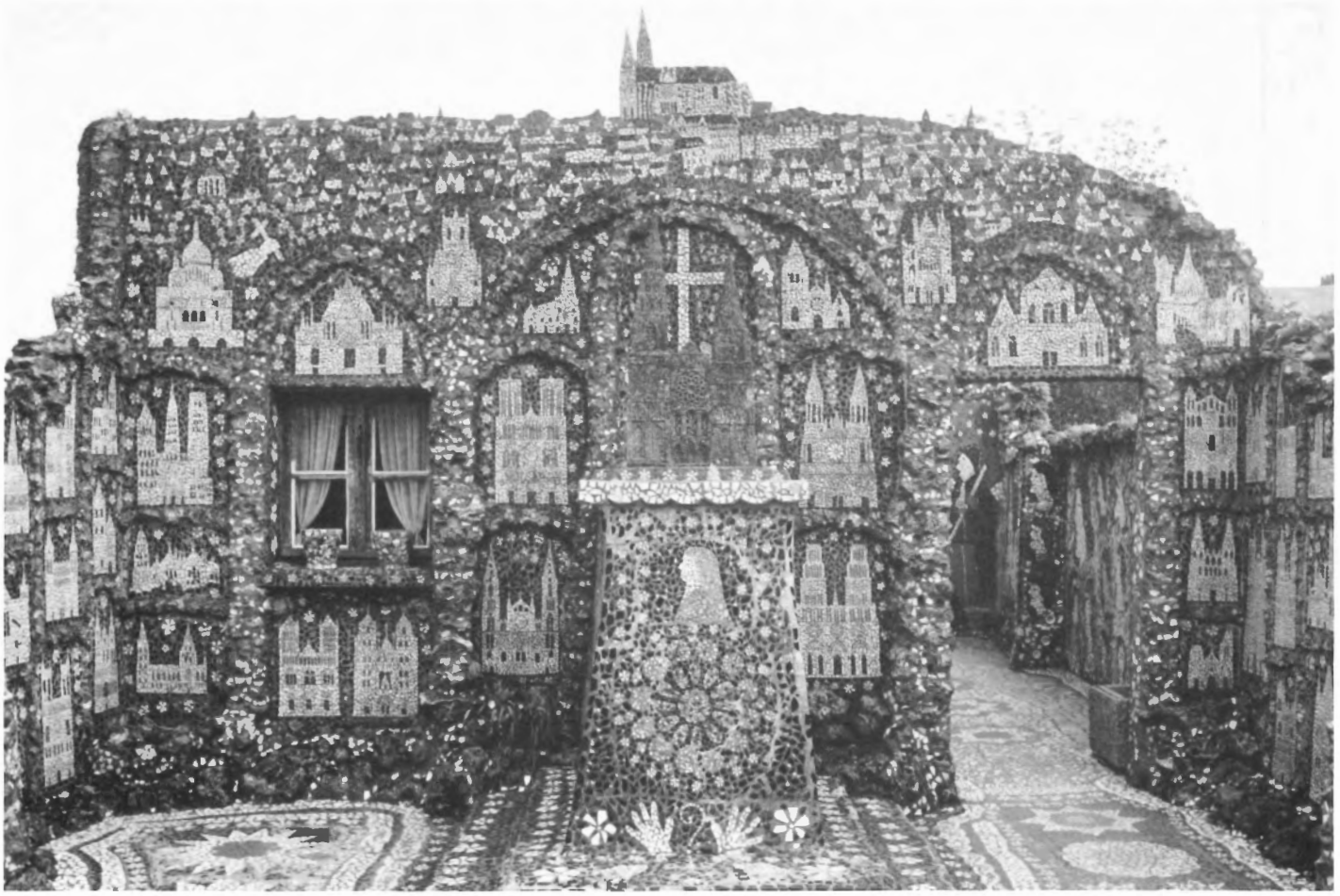
Entrance and front of Maison Picassiette. Photo: Carol Beesley.

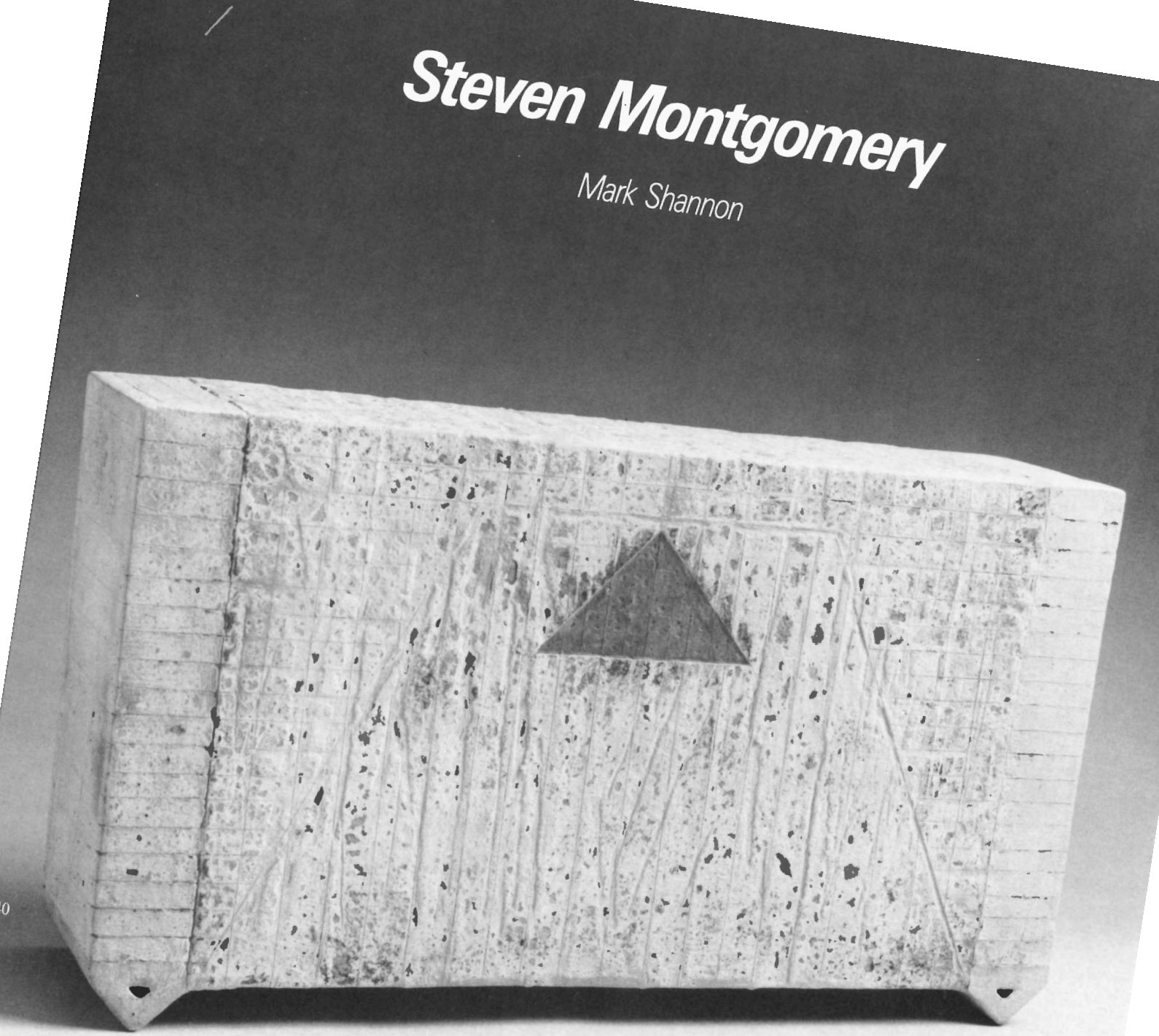
Detail of the Black Courtyard, Maison Picassiette. Photo: Carol Beesley.

South view of the Black Courtyard, Maison Picassiette. Photo: Carol Beesley.



Steven Montgomery

Mark Shannon



Pythagorean *(1977–1982), 13" x 23¼" x 6"*
ed clay. Collection Daniel Jacobs, New
Photo: Michael McTwigan.

Steven Montgomery's art is gracefully crafted and conceptually original. It is also threatening. In constant and uncompromising dialogue with his materials, which in the last eight years have evolved from clay through wood to metal, this thirty-one-year-old artist has produced a body of work at once elegant and unsettling. Often architectural in vocabulary and feel, Montgomery's work explores the nuances of containment, the conflict between security and incarceration.

Montgomery's first mature clayworks are freestanding objects made in the late 1970s while he was a graduate student at Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia. Although ceramic, they allude less to vessels that might hold the fruits of human labor than to containers for the human body itself—to sarcophagi, ritualistic "vessels of passage." Montgomery built up the surface of their horizontal, rectangular forms, each of which is perched atop two triangular feet, by scraping, burning, and scoring layers of evocatively colored clay. These intricate and expansively beautiful walls—often resembling courses of weathered brick—initiate the play of scale that is central to all of Montgomery's art. Here the rich mottling of the clay reflects the haunting disproportion between this world and the next, between substance and void. For all their textural complexity, the walls of the sarcophagi seem thin, even fragile, demanding that we contemplate what lies inside, the nature of the vastness they might hold or inspire.

In his next major series, begun shortly after and overlapping with the previous motif, Montgomery moves from a horizontal to a vertical format. These larger, monolithic structures refer more directly to buildings and, most strikingly, their vocabulary now includes portals or windows, thresholds to their interiors. As incorporated into a piece such as *Untitled No. 3* of 1977, these thresholds—two tiny corners cut into a reddish, architectonically scored surface, draw our gaze in like a breath, animating the space, charging it with significance. Approximating the proportions of the human figure, its presence as an "other" is brought to bear on the viewer. It is both alluring and threatening in its capacity for intimacy. By deftly manipulating a visual rhythm of corresponding scales, Montgomery creates an experience both of a delimited, beautifully managed, aesthetic object and of disturbing proximity to the boundless unknown.

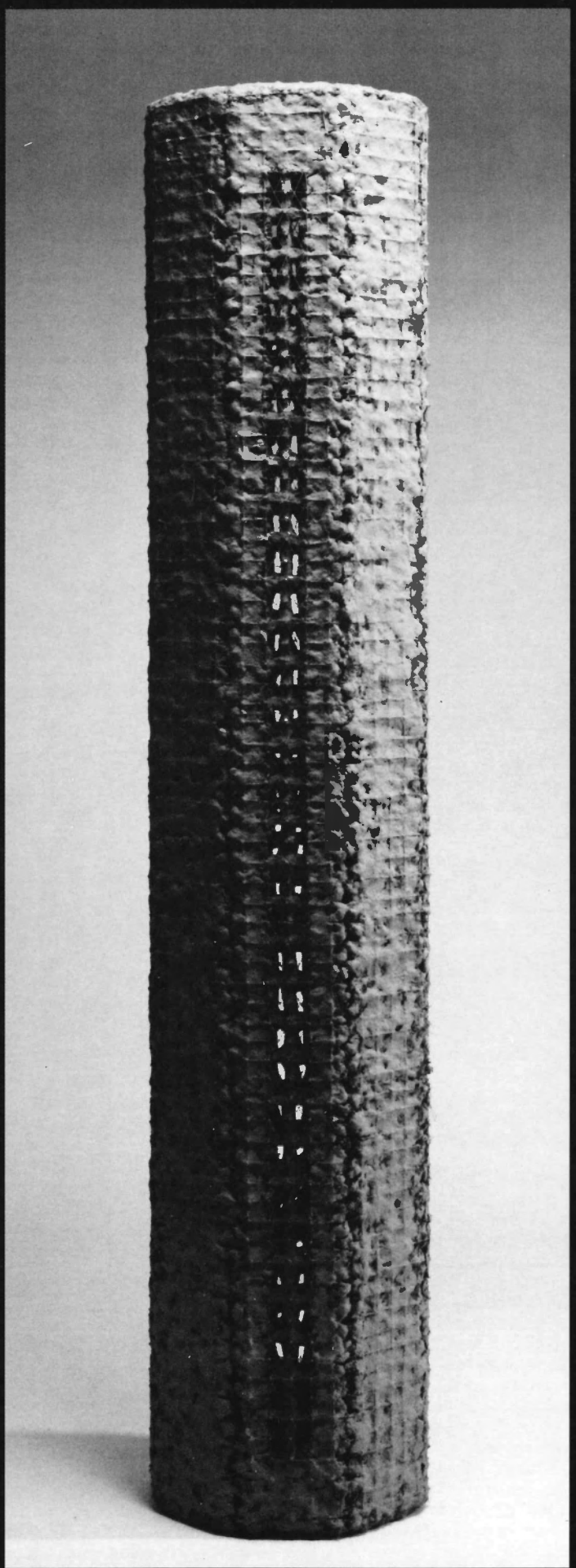
In another untitled monolith, this one dating from 1979, Montgomery makes another stride in his journey into the interior. Here the clay starts to wear away. Vertical rows of openings now pierce a surface apparently eroded by the elements, or perhaps, and more disconcertingly, eaten away from the inside out. A strange intelligence seems at work here, the cool formal aplomb of the earlier pieces now tempered and transformed by a force emanating from the interior.

Montgomery now begins to complicate his materials. Adobe is caked and smeared over an armature of charred wood and thin wire woven across the openings and held in place by nails. He begins to "peel back the layers of clay," both investigating what lies underneath and performing what he likens to alchemical research into the nature and possible admixtures of the clay itself.

Experimenting with various pigments, muds, metals, and the like, Montgomery soon found his use of clay thinning into a façade, with the material becoming more like paint than an inherently structural element. As he continued to delve into and redefine the nature of the medium he had grown up with as an artist, he also took a hard look at his metaphors and forms. His sculptures soon became more abstract, continuing their growth upward by leaving the ground entirely as wall pieces. Still applying deeply hued adobe over shaped and charred wood, these hovering works abstract, and perhaps even extract, an open corner or slice of the previous enclosed work.

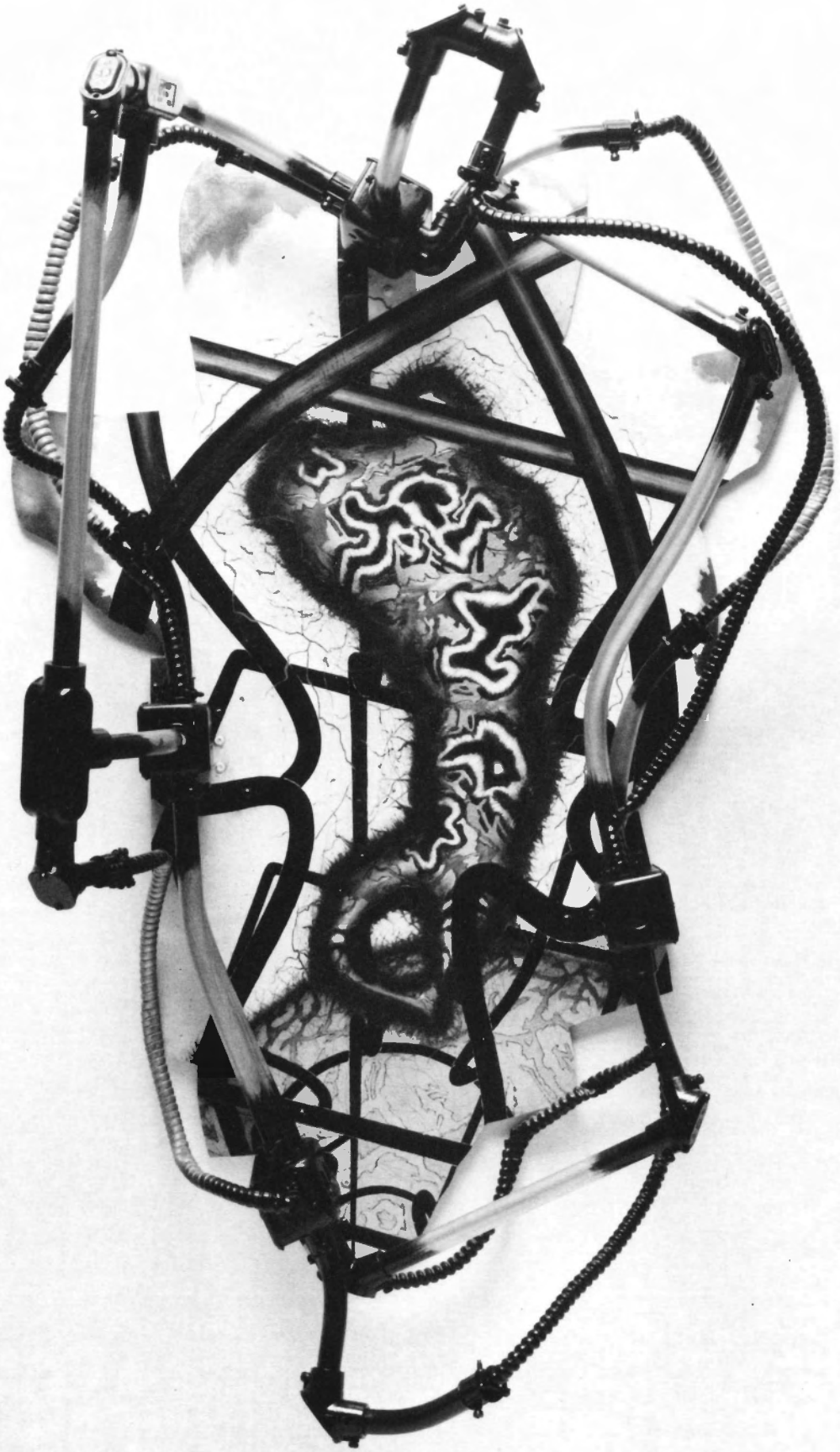
On an anthropomorphic scale, many of the pieces in this wall series read distinctly as parts of the body, that most essential of all providers and prisons. One is vagina shaped, another gracefully curved like a spine. Architecturally, they function as elements raised to the level of icon—a characteristic, incidentally, of the designs of such postmodern architects as Robert Venturi and Michael Graves. Just as image for these architects creeps to the surface of structure, so has Montgomery's structural mainstay become a medium for images.

Untitled No. 5 *(1979), 94" high, adobe, wood, paint. Collection Daniel Jacobs, New York. Photo: Malcolm Varon.*



Octagonist *(1979), 72¾" x 14¼" diameter, adobe, wood, nails, wire, paint. Collection Daniel Jacobs, New York. Photo: Michael McTwigan.*

Handy Ell *(1985), 31" x 19" x 16", painted clay, conduit, junction boxes. Photo: Michael McTwigan.*



During this period, in late 1979 and 1980, Montgomery also began to draw more than he had in the past several years. These drawings were often attempts, allusive but abstract, to portray or evoke the forces once hidden deep within his structures, the animating forces of his art.

Montgomery abandoned himself to his new fascination with teeming, vibrant, and slightly "otherworldly" imagery when he received an invitation to participate in the 1980 WARDSISLAND outdoor sculpture show. Traced into all manner of materials, including metal, wood, and barbed wire, and painted bright red, blue, and yellow, *Echolalia* proved a catalyst for an explosion. "The clay was now completely peeled away," Montgomery recalls, "and this other part of my art self jumped out."

Although *Echolalia* was a singular effort in Montgomery's career, it initiated a new phase in which he began working with a number of central materials other than clay. In the last two years, this new line of "research" has culminated in a striking series of wall constructions. Bearing titles such as *Net Physic*, *Meta-Sea*, and *Big-Sci*, they present abstract but animated shapes enamelled on sheet metal, scratched and scored, within an orbit of brightly painted electrical conduit and junction boxes. Through the interior of the pieces float biomorphic forms, some of them resembling human figures, with rendered swaths and vortices continuing the exhilarating, if somewhat ominous, whir of the conduit.

The play of proportion that concerns Montgomery in all of his art is here masterfully radicalized. We could be looking, say, at a microscopic view of glazed clay, or we could be a God's-eye witness to cosmic events. In the same instant, the undulating forms are also anthropomorphic, partaking of human scale, and the electrical building materials—the life-supplying network of buildings—refer us once again to the inner structures of architecture.

With these superbly worked pieces, we have entered an interior vast in its implications. This series again forces us to ask questions, to respond to threat and threshold, but now the ground upon which these issues are raised is dramatically altered. The distance between ourselves and the objects, between our meditations and the world inspiring them, has been filled and transformed by palpitating scale and association. The hollow space in which we once contemplated the untitled works now reverberates with a welter of information, which, as is the case in our present era, is developing a mind and momentum of its own—becoming, one might say, a new "net physic."

It is to Montgomery's great credit that in unflaggingly following the demands and questions raised by his art, he has moved from ancient ritual to work probing the disorientations of our current condition. But as in each of his previous phases, he once again meets threat with art and aligns it with the sublime.

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Net Physic 8 *(1984), 40½" x 24" x 13½", painted sheet metal, conduit, junction boxes,* BX *cable. Photo: Michael McTwigan.*

Henry Chapman Mercer

Cleota Reed

In 1896, at age forty, Henry Chapman Mercer of Doylestown, Pennsylvania, counted himself among America's leading archaeologists. A year later, in a career change that astounded most of his friends and colleagues, he abandoned archaeology and began the experiments that soon established him as one of the most original and successful ceramic tilemakers of the American Arts and Crafts movement.

Mercer must have seemed an unlikely recruit to the movement. Though he had dabbled in drawing and etching as a young man, he had shown little special interest in design. As a man of independent means, he had no need to work for a living. Yet he became one of the hardest-working ceramists of his day and, unlike most of his contemporaries, consistently operated his handcrafted tile operation at a profit.

He was introduced to the ideas of the Arts and Crafts movement when he was a student at Harvard University in the late 1870s. Professor Charles Eliot Norton taught that crafts formed the true foundation of the fine arts in all ages, and that the ethos of any age is found in its cultural artifacts. This idea would become a basis for Mercer's subsequent ceramic work.

After graduation, Mercer studied law (but never practiced it) and traveled extensively in Europe and Egypt. He floated down the Danube and Rhone rivers over the course of a few summers in a houseboat with friends, his dog, and a manservant, taking photographs and making notes on what he saw. He idled away many weeks in museums and historic buildings. He was too serious and far too proper to be thought of as a playboy, but he was nearly thirty before he found a profession. He entered the field of archaeology as a gentleman amateur and within a few years was a full-fledged professional with little time for anything but work.

He joined the archaeological staff of the University of Pennsylvania Museum in the early 1890s. He had become particularly intrigued by the idea that crafts artifacts, such as pottery shards and tool fragments, gave vital clues to the essence of prehistoric societies. Art and craft became inseparable from history for him. First as an archaeologist and then as a tilemaker, he spent most of his life searching the arts for clues to history and searching history for subjects that would come alive in his own art. The interplay between the two is at the heart of all that Mercer did as a tilemaker.

By 1897, he was unhappy with his working conditions at the University Museum and increasingly interested in the artifacts of pre-industrial Pennsylvania that were so plentiful in his own Bucks County. He first planned to revive a defunct Pennsylvania German folk pottery as a living history adjunct to the Bucks County Historical Society in Doylestown. This proved to be impractical. But captivated by what he had learned about the folk potteries of the region and fascinated by the historic ceramic tiles he had seen in Europe, he set about handcrafting his own decorative tiles, learning the fundamentals of handling and firing clay from local folk potters. A growing demand for handcrafted products among the

(Opposite) Moravian Pottery and Tile Works (built 1910–1912), view across cloister yard to tower. Photo: Cleota Reed.

Dormer Room, Fonthill. Mercer created his brocade style along with his concrete building as a means of decorating the harsh texture of concrete with colored tiles. Photo: Cleota Reed.

new generation of Arts and Crafts architects, some of whom, such as Wilson Eyre of Philadelphia, were acquaintances, encouraged him to persist in this new activity. By 1898, all of his energies went into tile making.

Initially, he located his pottery operation in and around his archaeological studio, an Arts and Crafts building he called Indian House, on the grounds of his family's estate.

In 1912, he moved to a new site in Doylestown where he had designed and constructed a greatly enlarged pottery facility in the form of a Mission-style cloister. He built this with poured-in-place, reinforced concrete, setting specimens of his tiles into the walls and onto the stacks of the kilns. He called his business the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works. This is a rather misleading name, however, since no Moravians were ever associated with the pottery nor did Mercer ever imitate the ceramic tiles that they made elsewhere in earlier times.

Though Mercer was a talented designer, he had no background in the ceramic arts and no formal art training beyond the amateur level. This distinguished him from every other important American tilemaker of his day, each of whom had professional training either in art or in the business of ceramic manufacturing. In less than two years, however, he had developed many striking new designs and glaze effects and had devised methods of hand fabrication that produced tiles cheaply enough to compete nationally with the machine-made varieties. He trained a small staff of artisans and laborers in his methods, but reserved the designing to himself. He oversaw every function of the pottery from the time of its founding until his death in 1930.

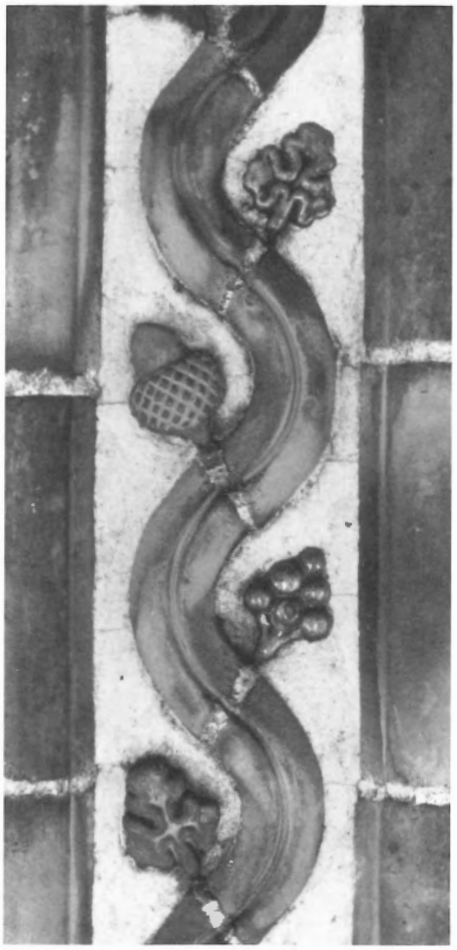
When he first set out to learn the potter's art and craft, he went about it systematically. He studied historic tiles in Europe, read up on ancient methods, examined museum collections, consulted the writings of Piccolpasso and Brongniart, and conferred with a glaze chemist in Trenton. Ulisse Cantigalli, the noted Italian ceramist, tested a sample of Mercer's local clay in Florence and confirmed that it would make good architectural terra cotta. William De Morgan, the English tile decorator of Arts and Crafts fame, went so far as to suggest that he and Mercer might collaborate in tile making, but this never came about. Instead, De Morgan presented Mercer with a glaze formula that the Moravian Pottery used as one of its basic glazes.

In 1899, Mercer built his first large kiln, an adaptation of the English industrial bottle kiln, and patented his original means of hand-fabricating and glazing tiles. Casting aside the old Pennsylvania German sgraffito and slip-trailing techniques, he perfected methods of pressing relief tiles and applying lustrous, two-toned glazes, which reveal only a subtle orange blush in the clay body. He never changed his methods or glazes, once established. From 1900 on, his creative energy went into the development of ever more original tile designs and styles.

Mercer produced three styles of tiles, each in response to a particular architectural need. The first style includes two kinds of conventional tiles, plain and relief, both produced as early as 1898. The flat-surfaced plain tiles, stamped out of hand-rolled slabs like cookies in geometric shapes, were used on floors and walls and as surrounds for decorative tiles. Relief tiles, also in standard geometric forms, were hand-pressed with decorative designs and hand-glazed. No two were ever precisely alike. The Moravian Pottery offered over two hundred conventional tile designs in its catalogue by 1904, and over four hundred by 1914. Through the years, conventional tiles accounted for about ninety percent of the pottery's sales. Among the finest early uses of his conventional tiles are the floors of Fenway Court, now the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston.

Mercer's second style, which he called *mosaic*, is closer to stained-glass design than to traditional tesserai mosaics. Working in this style, Mercer transferred his original outline drawing to a clay slab and cut it into pieces along the outlines while still wet. The flat-surfaced pieces were then variously colored, fired, and reassembled like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle in a base of concrete. He left wide joints between the pieces, up to half an inch, and these formed the contour lines of the designs, which were applied to both walls and floors. (He patented the process in 1902.) The most spectacular example of the mosaic style is the floor he designed for the Pennsylvania State Capitol at Harrisburg.

His third style, *mural brocade*, dates from 1906. For this style, Mercer extracted the main elements of a design from their background, chosing those that lent



(Clockwise from top left) Heraldic Lion, *4" x 4", conventional relief tile with Medieval theme.*
Swan and Tower *(1901), 4" x 4", glazed ceramic relief tile, adapted from sixteenth-century Spanish tile in collection of British Museum. Photo: J. Courtney Frisse.*
Grapevine Border *on* New World *fireplace (1913), in brocade style, Dormer Room, Fonthill. Photo: J. Courtney Frisse.*
Tony Weller and the Parson *(1916), detail of* Pickwick *fireplace, Fonthill, adapted from 1837 Phiz illustration in Dickens's* The Pickwick Papers. *Photo: Cleota Reed.*
Reproduction of Shoemaker *mosaic made by the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works, installed in the new pavillion of the Mercer Museum, 1980. Photo: Cleota Reed.*

(Opposite, clockwise from top left) Bone et Bene, *5½" square, conventional relief tile. Photo: Cleota Reed.*
Saint John, *Moravian tile, 4½" square. This is one of a series of tiles representing the Evangelists, based on the design of a Romanesque perforated handbell. Photo: Cleota Reed.*
Beast and Fleur de Lys, Windsor and Tintern, *5¼" square, conventional relief tile. Photo: Cleota Reed.*
New World *panel in Moravian Pottery and Tile Works,* Departure and Arrival of Columbus in the New World. *Left panel shows Columbus with his three ships. Center,* Arrival in New World. *Right,* Ferdinand and Isabella. *Photo: Cleota Reed.*

themselves to sculptural representation: figures, animals, birds, flowers, trees, and other three-dimensional shapes. He treated each element as a separate entity, cutting it in silhouette and modeling it in deep relief, sometimes piercing it completely. These irregularly shaped tiles were finish-fired, then freely assembled into pictorial or other arrangements. They were set into concrete or plaster in such a way that the mortar became a background field. The sculptural surfaces made these tiles unsuitable for pavements, but on walls or ceilings, lively patterns of light and shade vivified their surfaces. Fonthill, his residence in Doylestown overlooking the Moravian Pottery, contains his richest brocade styles. This building was also designed by Mercer and built in 1908–1912 of poured-in-place, reinforced concrete. So, too, was his third major building, the Mercer Museum in Doylestown (1914–1916).
With the same hand methods of stamping and pressmolding he used to make tiles, Mercer also manufactured tile mouldings and other architectural elements, roofing tiles, and a primitive sort of art pottery. Mercer's progression of styles—from conventional tiles, to mosaic, to brocade—was one of constantly enlarged possibilities for expression. His life as a historian, archaeologist, world traveler, collector of Americana, folklorist, and scholar of many things opened a Pandora's box of subjects for his tiles. Indeed, all of his subjects were derived, directly or indirectly, from personal experience, and this too made him unique among the tilemakers of his day. Subject and style are interdependent in all of his work, and account for much of the consistency and integrity of the product. His tiles were a means of sharing his enthusiasms. He wrote:

I agree that the design must be an aesthetic success and, further, that it may be such a success without any meaning at all. But if tiles could tell no story, inspire or teach nobody, and only served to produce aesthetic thrills, I would have stopped making them long ago.[1]

In one way or another, the tiles Mercer made on such major themes as the Bible, the Four Seasons, the Old World, and the Discovery of the New World, were reports on something new he had found about old subjects. His stories in tile nearly always illustrated the fruits of his research. Mercer's very first tile designs in 1898 are a good example. He was then writing an article about the old cast-iron stoveplates he had collected in and near Bucks County, showing how their images in relief shared the iconography of Pennsylvania German pottery. He decided to reproduce details of their tulip designs on his tiles. Instead of drawing tulips on pottery by the sgraffito or slip-trailing methods of the old potters, he pressed tulip designs cast directly from the stoveplates onto tiles with a hand-operated tile press he made for the purpose. He also extracted the architectural elements of the stoveplates—columns, canopies, and arches—and adapted them for use as framing devices for his tiles.

He had always fancied and collected historical art objects, and these, too, became subjects for his own art. A relief section of a brass tray he had collected in Egypt in 1882 became the *Persian Antelope* tile. An illustration of a Romanesque perforated hand bell inspired the Evangelist series. A cast of a Salerno ivory he had bought in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London became the *Creation of Eve* tile. He was so enamored of a Spanish tile he called *Swan and Tower* that he copied it and then adapted it several times more in different styles and sizes.

Most of these Old World subjects reflected the tastes of a visitor from the New World. Americans who bought and used Mercer's tiles had little interest in their original meanings, though Mercer, as a scholar, made a point of discovering these meanings for himself.

My designs...are copied from old abbeys and monasteries in England, Scotland, and Ireland, from public buildings in Rome, Madrid, and Paris, from Persian and Arabic tiles sent me by friends, but especially from German stove plates....These have been my models, but I have not stuck slavishly to them. Whatever you see here has at least the merit of originality worked into it.[2]

When he was in Europe for the Paris Exposition in 1900, he studied collections of medieval tiles, first in the British Museum and then at the Hotel de Cluny in Paris and in the Germanic Museum in Nuremburg. He was thrilled by these old tiles and returned to his pottery inspired to reproduce many of them and to incorporate them into medievallike pavements of a kind previously unknown in America and quite different from the slick, Victorian machine-made reproductions of medieval tiles then on the market. Mercer's were the first true Arts and Crafts tiles in America to exert a strong influence on other tilemakers.

Mercer was particularly taken by the fourteenth-century tiles made by the Bawsey Tile Works for Castle Acre Priory in East Anglia and he reproduced nine of their designs at once. The original Castle Acre tiles had been pressed in counter relief, much as his own were, and glazed all over. But after six centuries of wear, only ghosts of the original designs were left on the old tiles. Mercer saw the commercial possibilities for floor tiles made with this worn look. By wiping the glaze off the foot surface as he made them, but leaving it in the recesses of the design, he produced new equivalents of old Castle Acre tiles. He explained, "You get the contrast at the start and don't have to wait for it till everybody is dead."[3] Mercer's reproductions are highly sensitive adaptations. He breathed life back into the old designs. He reproduced many other British medieval designs and some French and German ones, too. These medieval designs enjoyed widespread popularity as facings on Arts and Crafts fireplaces and as pavings in churches, particularly in the New-Gothic buildings championed by architect Ralph Adams Cram in the early decades of the twentieth century.

Early in 1901, when Isabella Stewart Gardner ordered over one hundred thousand Moravian tiles for Fenway Court, Mercer became a major figure in the Arts and Crafts movement. He had already been elected a Craftsman member of the movement's leading organization, the Society of Arts and Crafts, Boston. The society now served as his New England sales agent, putting him in touch with the most important architects in Boston, most of whom were the society's founders. Soon he had dealers and agents in other cities across the country; he exhibited his tiles in Arts and Crafts exhibitions in Boston, Providence, Buffalo, Rochester, Chicago, Philadelphia, New York, and Detroit, and he won a medal at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904. Contemporary periodicals sang the praises of Moravian tiles. They were often used for fireplace facings in the inglenooks of Arts and Crafts houses, as architects sought to incorporate crafts into the fiber of their new designs. Such well-known architects as Wilson Eyre, Stanford White, Julia Morgan, Irving Gill, Cass Gilbert, and Will Price specified installations of Mercer's tiles.

In 1902, when the architect Joseph Huston received the commission for the new state capitol at Harrisburg, he asked Mercer to design the pavement of the great rotunda. The scale of this job, calling for sixteen thousand square feet of tiles, led Mercer to develop his mosaic style. His conventional tiles had worked well for Gardner's Fenway Court, where they were part of the background for her art collection, but

dominating element of his building. Mercer conceived his mosaics, four hundred in all, as pictorial decorations. When viewed from the great staircase or from the Gallery above, they appeared as patches of color on a clay-red field, not unlike an Oriental rug. But viewed from pedestrian level, each design came into focus as an illustration of the life or lore of the Commonwealth, amounting to an iconography of Pennsylvania history.

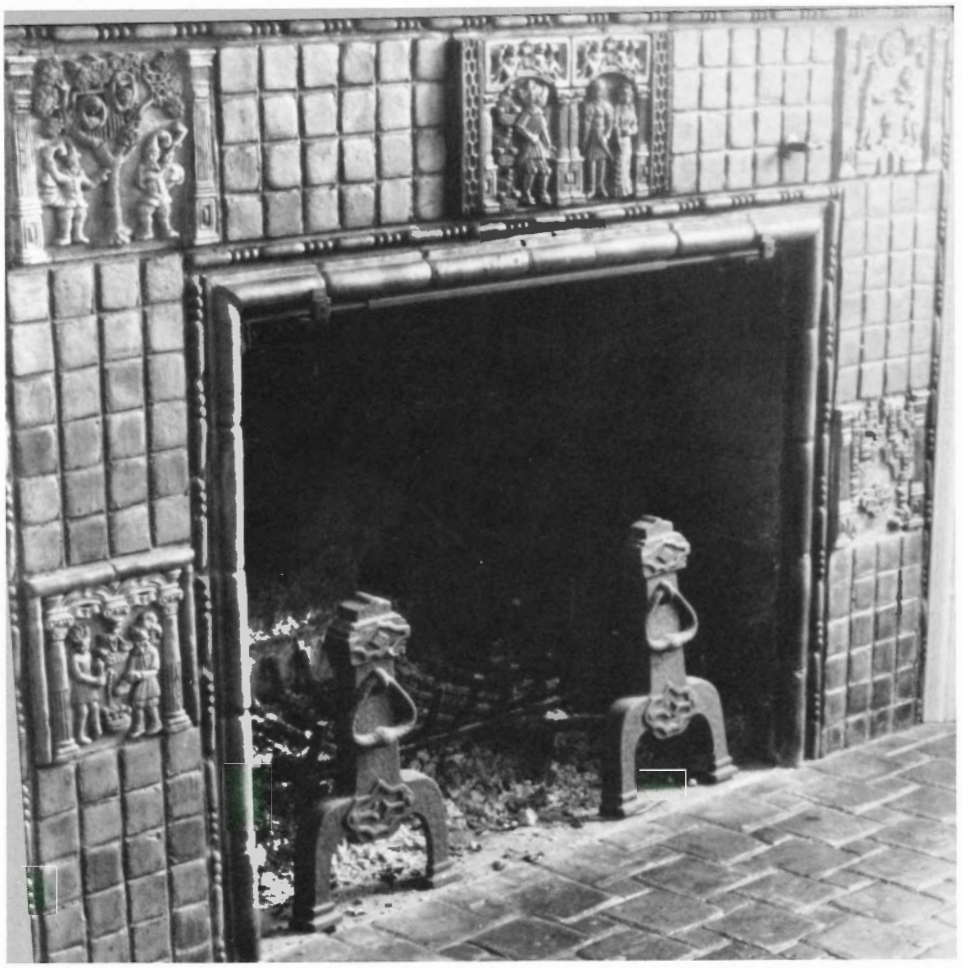
With the Harrisburg floor, Mercer departed from European subjects and their derivations and from this point on chose themes for his work that were entirely American.

In 1908, he became involved in another architectural project that radically affected his tile designs. This time the building was his own residence, Fonthill. His new brocade style, which began simultaneously with the design of Fonthill, may have been suggested by the texture of brocade fabrics from which he later adapted wall designs. He needed a new kind of tile with which to embellish "the noble and beautiful" process of poured concrete with color and decorative detail.[4] He devised ingenious methods for installing tiles as he poured concrete and he also applied brocades and other tiles on capitals, soffits, and walls after the concrete had set. The most spectacular of the many installations at Fonthill is the ceiling of the Columbus Room.

This installation is as important for its subject as for its style. It marks Mercer's discovery of the New World theme, a theme that focused his ideas and held great personal meaning for him. It brought together many of his interests from his admiration of Columbus to his own explorations as an archaeologist in the Yucatan. He viewed himself as a discoverer of the past and took Columbus's motto, *Plus Ultra* ("More Beyond"), as his own. Since his Columbus Room New World brocade ceiling was made to fit a special and unusual site, in 1913 he adapted the theme for more conventional uses. He designed modular brocade relief panels, made in two standard heights of eight and fourteen inches and in varying lengths, which could be ordered by the running foot for use as friezes or in suggested arrangements for fireplaces and panels. The optional addition of tile borders, architectural frameworks, and fillers, according to the space requirements of individual jobs, made the designs extremely flexible.

These relief panels proved to be Mercer's best format for his storytelling approach. *Tiles of the New World*, a theme that grew to over seventy-five subjects, depicted such varied scenes as *Departure of Columbus* for the New World, *The Sea of Darkness*, Mayan *Indians Making Fire*, *Eskimo Dogs*, and the *Arms of Captain John Smith*. In 1913, as he was writing a book about his cast-iron stoveplate collection, *The Bible in Iron*, he designed another relief series based on the imagery of the stoveplates, titled *The Bible in Tile*.

Mercer followed the *New World* and *Bible* series with his "picture book" reliefs of 1915. These brocade tiles were finer in detail, more expressive in modeling, and more clearly concerned with the character and



Caught Smoking, *sketch for* Cornstalk Fiddles *relief (1925). Photo: Cleota Reed.*

New World *fireplace (1913), in brocade style, Dormer Room, Fonthill. Photo: J. Courtney Frisse.*

content of the stories he illustrated than any of his earlier works. As usual, the subjects were highly personal, deriving from favorite stories, his own experiences, and childhood memories. First he made a version of Charles Dickens's classic, *Pickwick Papers*, adapting illustrations from the original serial edition. He then designed a *Bluebeard* fireplace.

In 1915, he created two highly original relief series based on American legends and folklore, drawing on the well-known story of *Rip Van Winkle* by Washington Irving and the musical myth of *The Arkansas Traveller*.

An obsession with American pioneer hand tools led Mercer to design and build a museum to house the twenty thousand tools he had gathered in less than twenty years. With the completion of the Mercer Museum in 1916—the last of his great concrete buildings—he now turned his attention increasingly to scholarship and writing about this collection, which he called "Tools of the Nationmaker." He had already drawn heavily on the collection as a source for his Harrisburg mosaics. His last narrative relief, *Cornstalk Fiddles* of 1925, also reflected his lifetime interest in American tools and farm lore. It is his most original, most spontaneous, and most directly stated work, based on a recollection by a friend of primitive musicmaking and childish pranks: boys working in the cornfields abandon their labors for highjinks when the farmer is out of sight—smoking cornsilk, waging cornstalk battles, making cornstalk fiddles, and dancing around in the barn. After letting the cows out, they are caught smoking by the farmer's wife and chased by the returning farmer. Mercer presented his tale directly, framed naturally with fences, barn doors, trees, and cornfields. Mercer's obvious enthusiasm for his subjects is wonderfully expressed in the postures and facial expressions of the figures, in their relationships to each other, and in their surrounds. He achieved an exuberance that is rare, if not unique, in American sculpture. Mercer had come a long way from his first stoveplate tiles to these wonderfully free reliefs. He continued to experiment with tile designs until a few months before his death. His many achievements and honors had been made possible in part by his private income, a supportive family, and a fine education, of course, and he was fortunate that his passionate interest in clay and tiles coincided with the short-lived interest of American architects in handcrafted ceramic decoration. But his successes depended also on his late-blooming but very exceptional talent for design on scales as different as a single tile and an entire building. It is no wonder that his tile-decorated buildings in Doylestown have been added to the National Register of Historic Places.

Mercer's tiles tell us much about their maker—the college aesthete, the dashing young tourist in Europe, the explorer of caves and jungles, the amateur architect, the scholar of Bibles and tools and tiles, the pioneer in so many fields of Americana, and the reclusive old man that he became late in life. With great ingenuity, perseverance, and integrity, Mercer broke away from the constraints of past practices in American tile making and, by looking deeply into the past and into his own life, created a truly original body of ceramic art.

1. Mercer to William Hagerman Graves, 14 November 1925. Mercer Papers, Spruance Library of the Bucks County Historical Society, Doylestown, Pennsylvania.
2. "Moravian Pottery," Bucks County *Intelligencer*, 1 September 1904.
3. Mercer to W. H. Andrew, 4 January 1926. Mercer Papers.
4. Henry Chapman Mercer, "Where Concrete Stands for Concrete," *Cement Age* vol. 6, (January 1908), p. 11.

Cleota Reed is a ceramist and historian of the American Arts and Crafts Movement. She is the author of studies of the architect Ward Wellington Ward, the historian and critic Irene Sargent, and most recently, The Henry Keck Stained Glass Studio 1913–1974, *published by the Syracuse University Press. She is now completing a book on Henry Chapman Mercer and his tiles.* *Copyright 1985 Cleota Reed.*

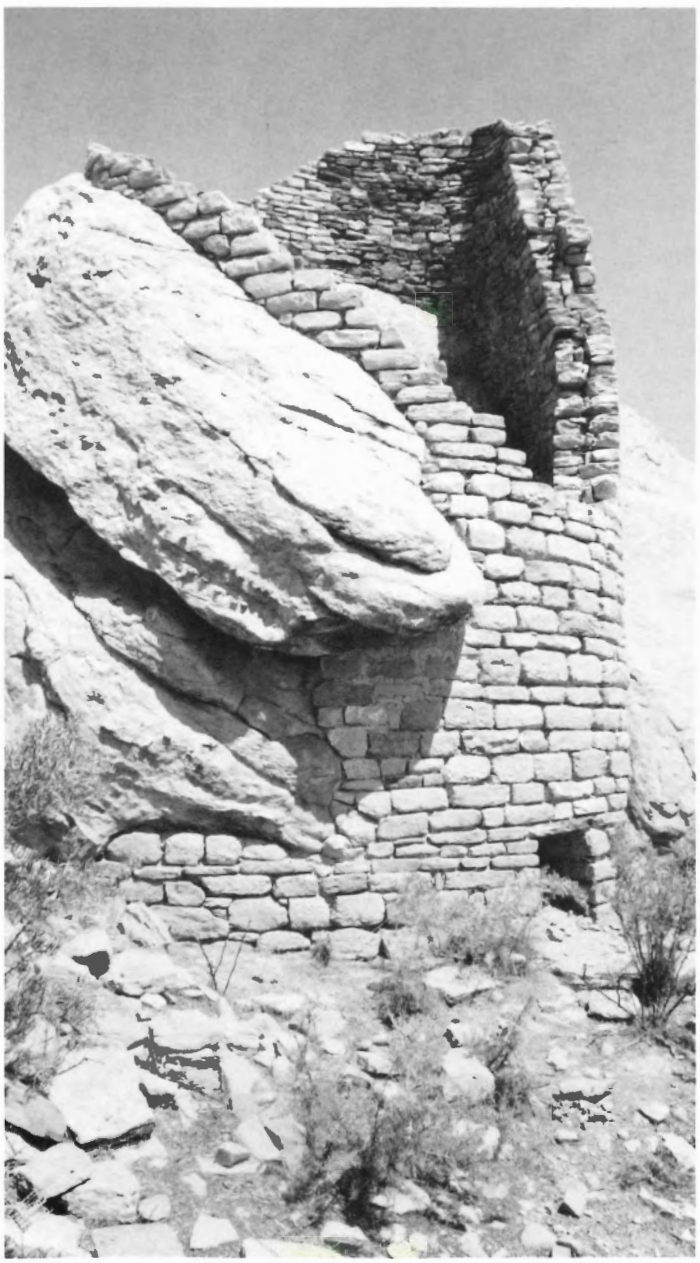
A House Is Not Always a Home

Susan Wechsler

(Below) House in Djenné, Mali, from Spectacular Vernacular *by Jean-Louis Bourgeois and Carollee Pelos. Photo: Copyright 1983 Carrollee Pelos.*

(Opposite, clockwise from top right) Model of Shawnee House *made by W. C. Orchard. Courtesy Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation.*
Seminole Thatched House, *near Ft. Lauderdale, Churchill Collection, 1909. Courtesy Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation.*
Rock Dwelling, *Hovenweep, Utah. Photo: William Fellows.*

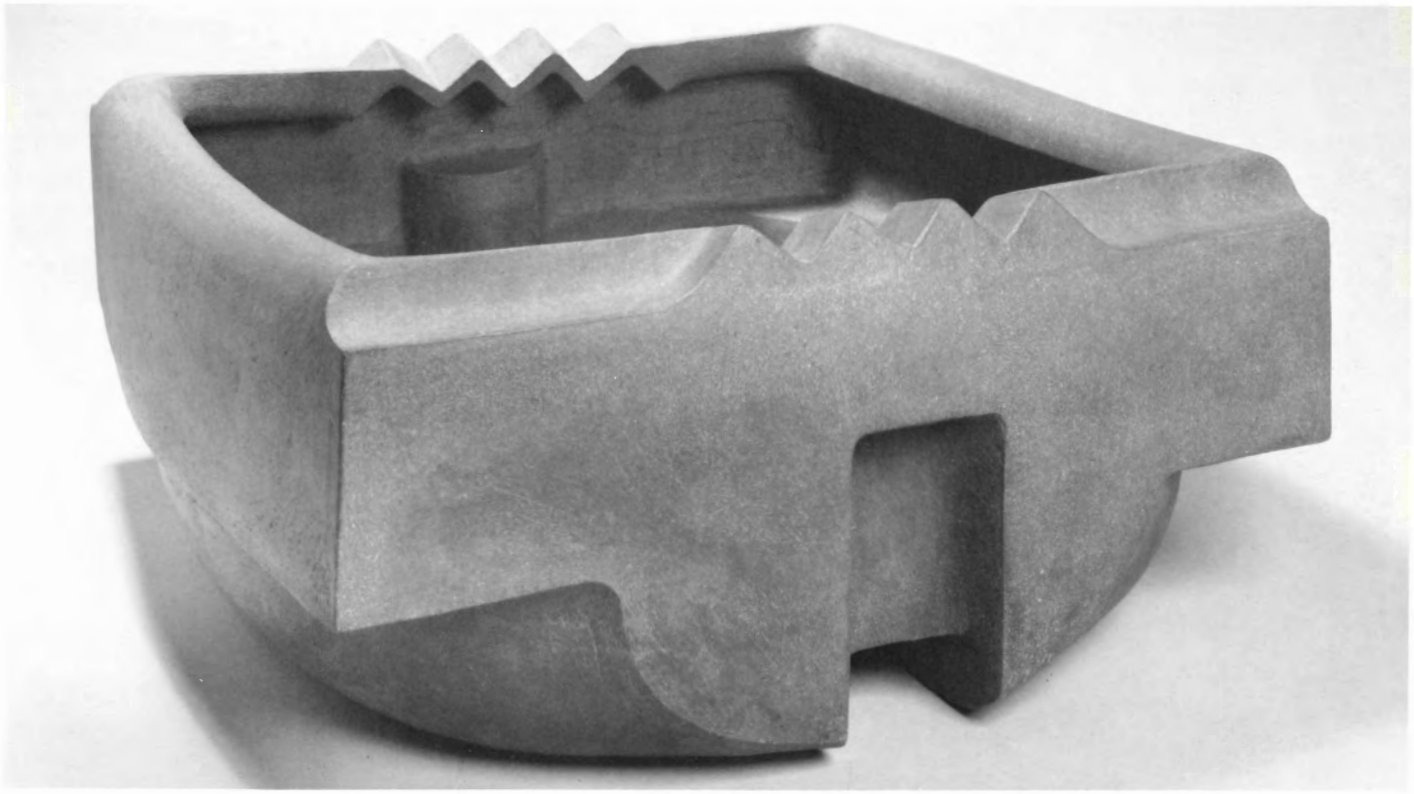
Houses take many different shapes, assume countless styles, and are built with innumerable materials, yet the building of a house inevitably involves the construction of walls to create interior volume. This and other important similarities link the traditions of architecture and ceramics. Although form need not follow function in either endeavor, the shape, style, texture, and size of a house and a vessel are both greatly influenced by the intended function of each, the materials available for building, and the dictates of local tradition. These affinities have led many ceramic artists to investigate architectural imagery. From pre-Columbian South America to eighteenth-century Staffordshire, potters have been intrigued and fascinated by the house form. Perhaps nowhere have the two traditions been so thoroughly integrated as in the desert, from India to West Africa, where many houses are built entirely of clay.

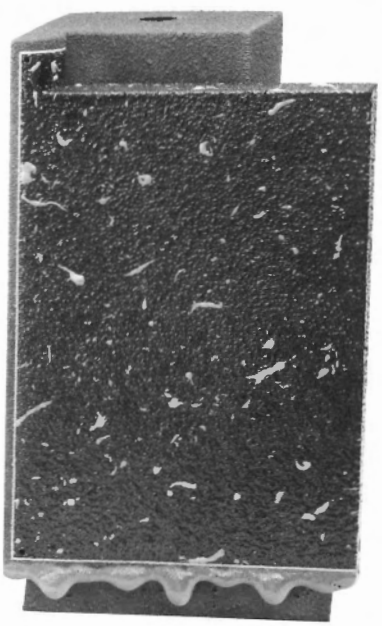


The merging of architecture and pottery, house and vessel, is rooted in the very beginnings of humankind as fabricator. We humans conceive the archetypal house as a vessel, and innumerable ceramic objects have been produced that focus on the container implications of the house form. Contemporary vesselmakers, in addition to exploring the vessel as architectural form, continue to be attracted by the content of architectural imagery.

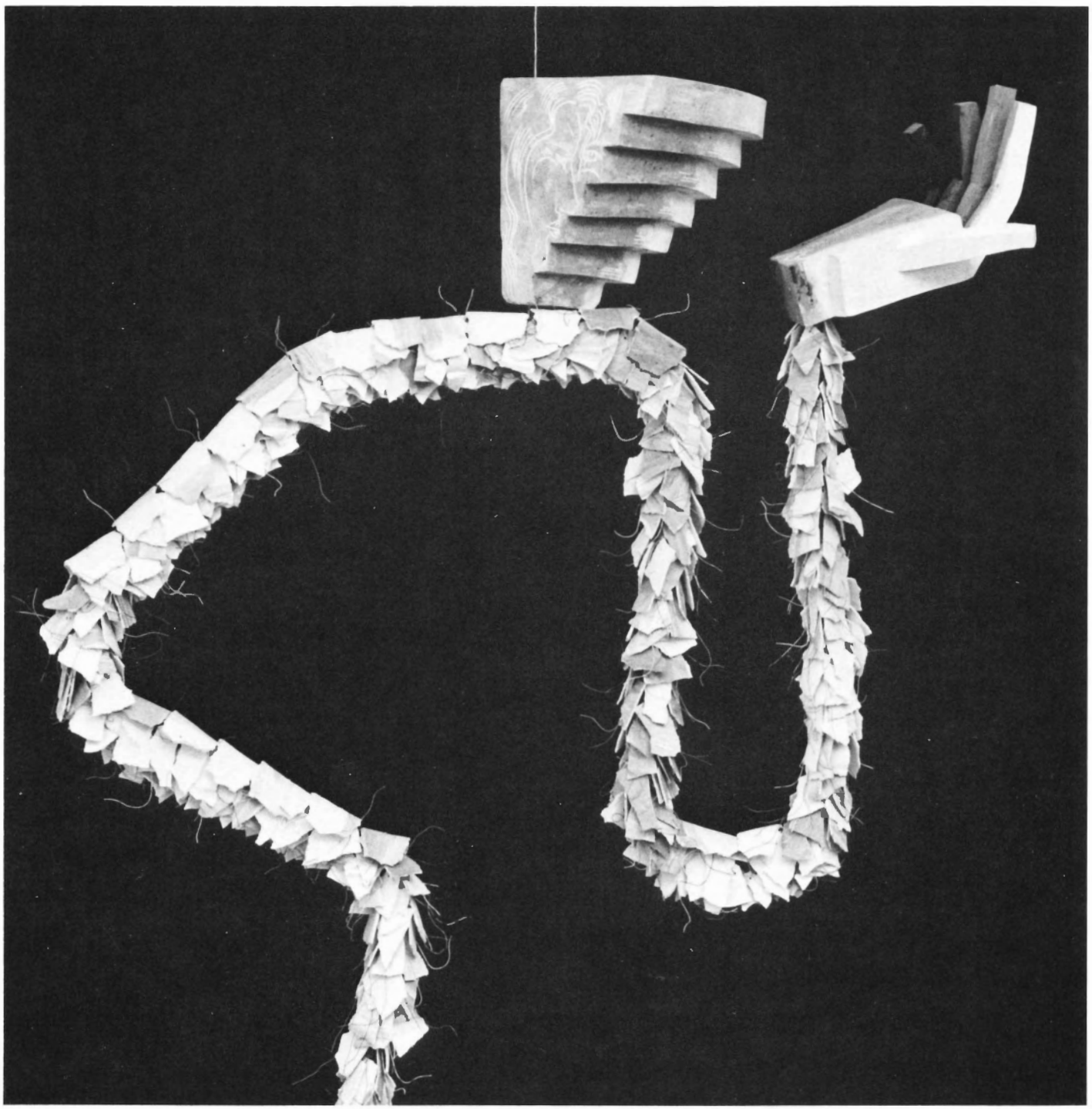
(Opposite) Teapot *(ca. 1745), Staffordshire Pottery, salt- glazed stoneware. Collection Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, gift of Carlton Macy, 1934.*

(Clockwise from top)
Vessel *(1979) by William Daley. Photo: Rolfe M. Baggett, Smithsonian Institution.*
Purple Slab *(1983) by Ron Nagle. Courtesy Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco. Photo: M. Lee Fatherree.*
Tertium Quid *(1984) by Anne Currier. Courtesy Helen Drutt Gallery, Philadelphia.*





After the vessel and the house, it is the human body that is most frequently represented as a container. Symbolically, the body is both vessel and house; it contains the first evidence of who we are in the world. Moreover, houses reflect the human scale, as well as the human touch, of their makers. Since many artists have chosen to focus on the figure as subject matter, it is not surprising to find examples that emphasize the classic body/vessel myth.



(Opposite) Detail, Untitled (Hand Uplifted) *(1983) by Michael Lucero, 106" x 48" x 24", ceramic and metal. Courtesy Charles Cowles Gallery, New York. Photo: D. James Dee.*

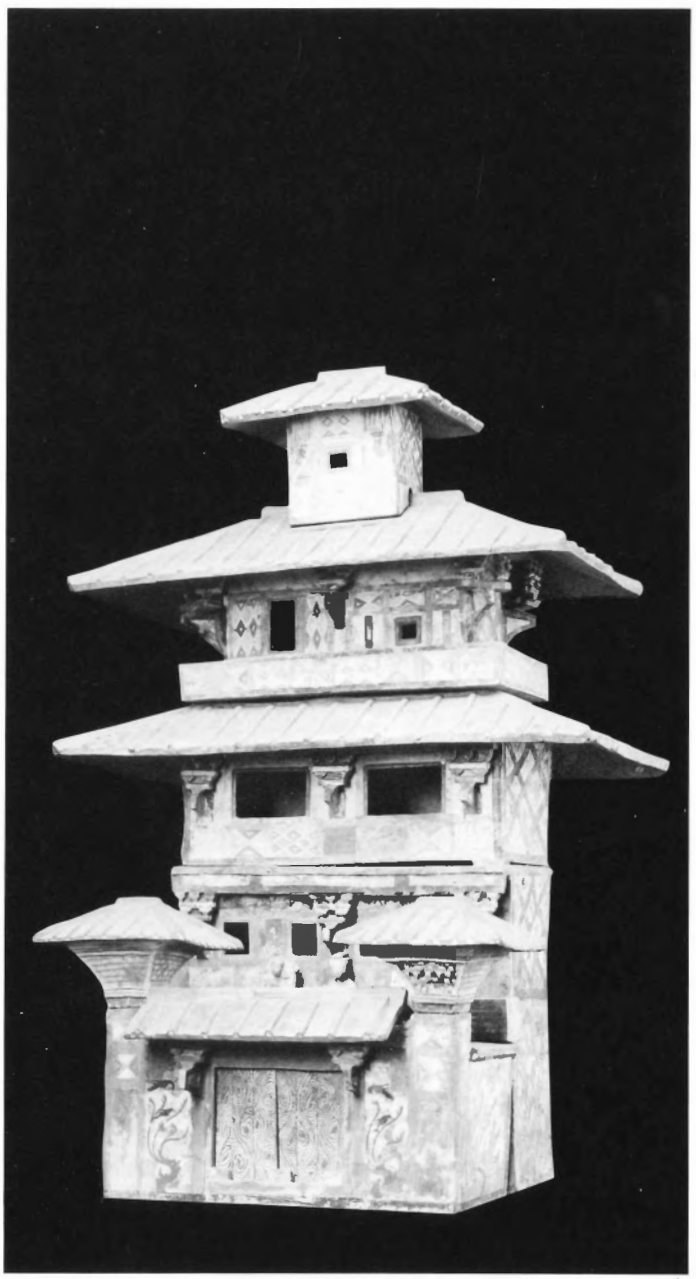
Kiln Man *(1971) by Robert Arneson, 36" x 12" x 12", terra cotta. Courtesy Allan Frumkin Gallery, New York.*
House and Home *(1983) by Kirk Mangus, 30" x 12" x 12". Courtesy Esther Saks Gallery, Chicago.*

Casa de Los Moros *(1985) by Jens Morrison, 36" high. Private collection.*

Seamstress *(1985) by Peter VandenBerge. Courtesy Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco.*

House Model, *Han Dynasty (206 B.C.–A.D. 221), 52" x 33½" x 27", polychromed pottery. Collection Nelson Gallery, Atkins Museum of Fine Arts, Kansas City.*

Just as the body is a vessel that contains *us, holds who we are, so is the house "the human being's first world," as Gaston Bachelard has written. Vincent Scully reminds us, too, that even in domestic use the house is the center for ritual. Certainly both house and vessel are of great religious significance, and spiritual houses are among the most prevalent images in the art of all cultures. Traditionally, houses that are specifically spiritual are created to accompany the dead and to satisfy their needs in the next world, to shelter and protect their remains, or to commemorate important members of the community.*

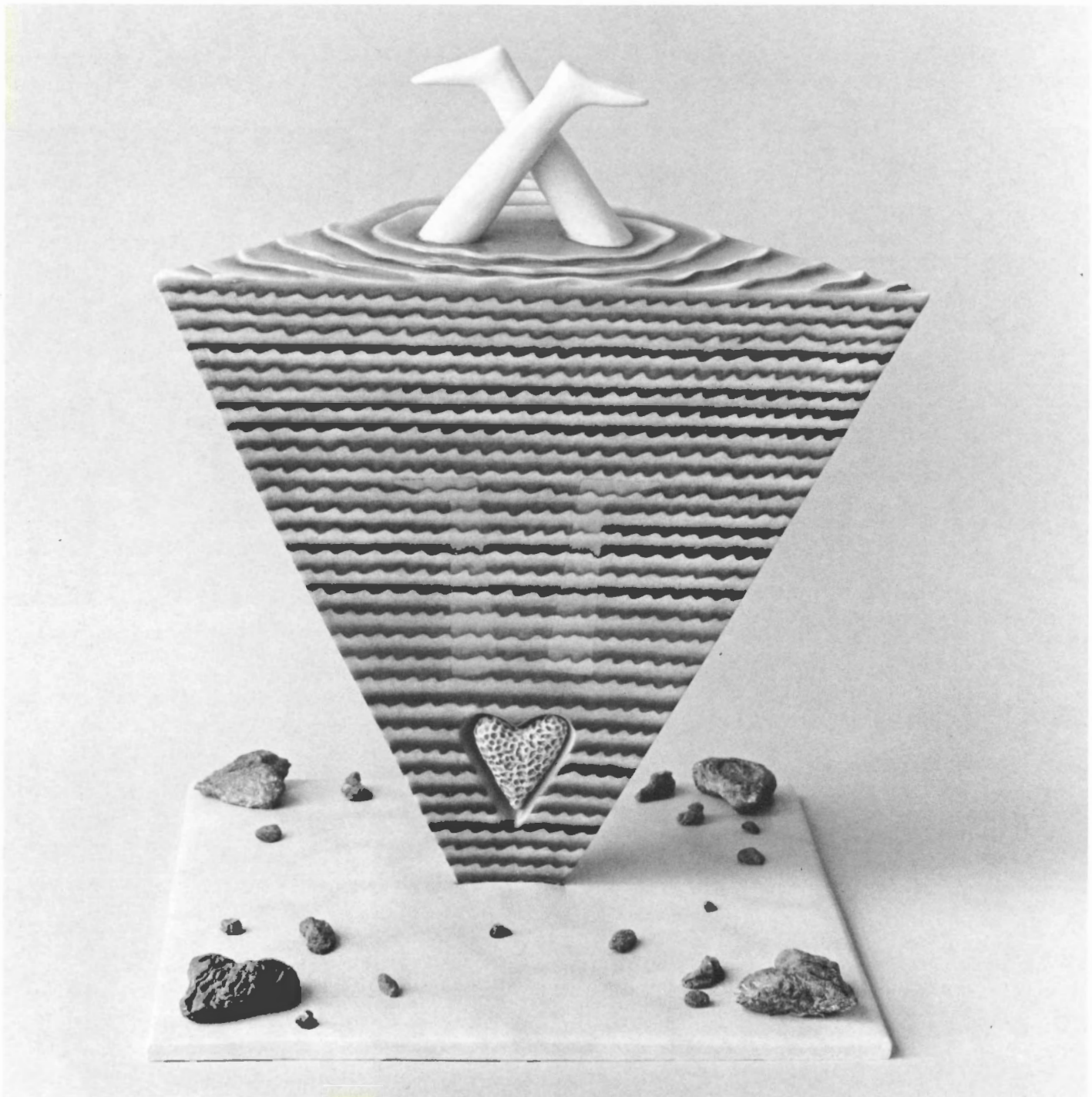


Home Sweet Home *by Michael Corney. Courtesy Esther Saks Gallery, Chicago. Photo: Peter De Lory.*

(Opposite, clockwise from top left) Paradise Shrine *(1981) by Toby Buonagurio, 25" x 17" x 16", ceramic with glazes, lustres, acrylic, paint, flocking, glitter. Courtesy Monique Knowlton Gallery, New York.*
Water Tank *(1982) by Raymon Elozua, 20" x 16" x 16", ceramic with oil. Courtesy Braunstein Gallery, San Francisco.*
You Captured My Heart *(1976) by Patti Warashina, 27" x 16" x 16", lowfire clay, underglaze, mixed media.*
Casa de las Palmas *(1985) by Jens Morrison, 45" x 28" x 17", earthenware. Private collection.*
Roadside Shrine, *Greece. Photo: Edgar Buonagurio.*
Toshogu Shrine, *five-storied pagoda, Nikko, Japan (1636). Courtesy Japan Information Center, New York.*

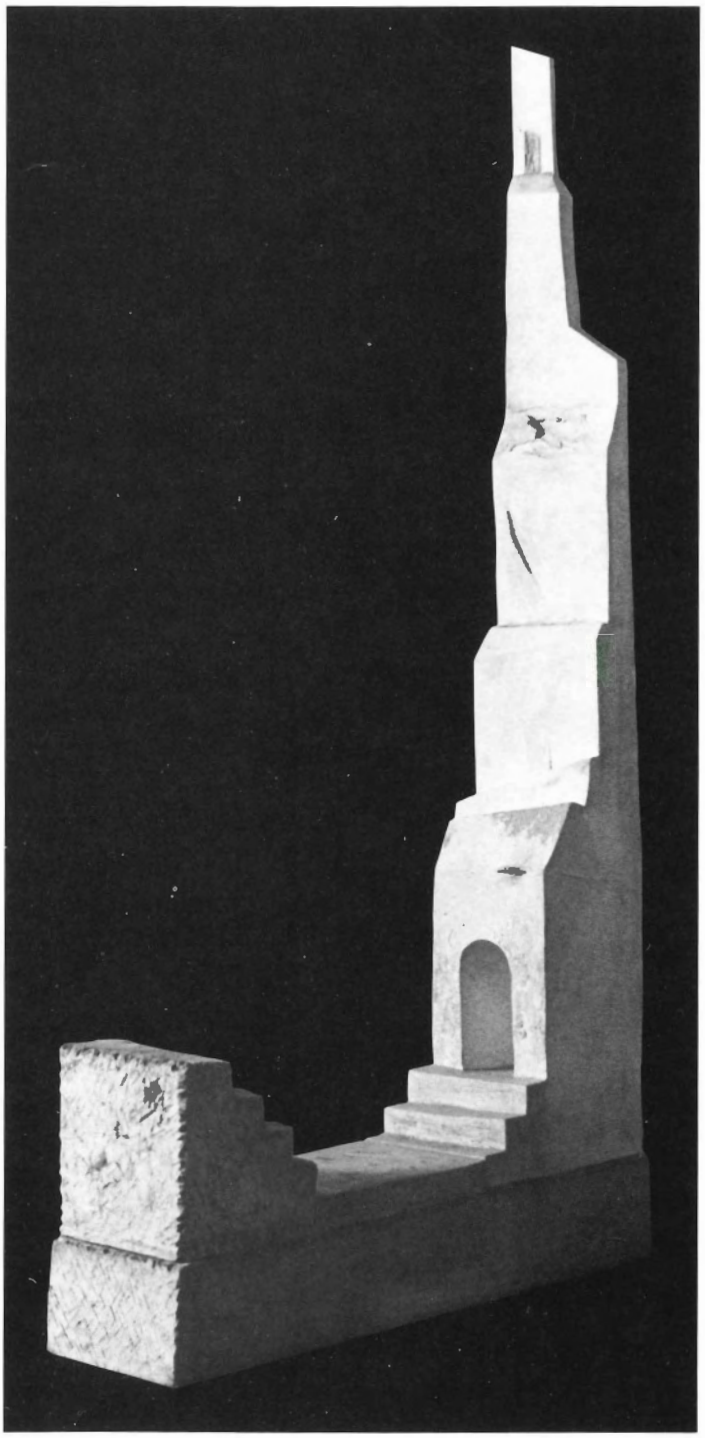
Shrines often take the form of houses. Consecrated places, they house the possessions and memories of holy persons, or contain ordinary objects to be blessed. They are houses invested with spiritual power. Certain elements common to most shrines provide an attractive source of imagery for the contemporary artist. Because they must be worthy of a saint, shrines are often sumptuous, elaborate, richly decorated, and elevated to a position of honor. Shelves or altars provide a resting place for objects to be blessed and offered to gods and ancestors. There is usually a marked contrast between outside and inside, the latter sealed off, dark, mysterious, and protected. Doors and windows, the ports of entry to a house, in shrines become symbolic avenues for worship.

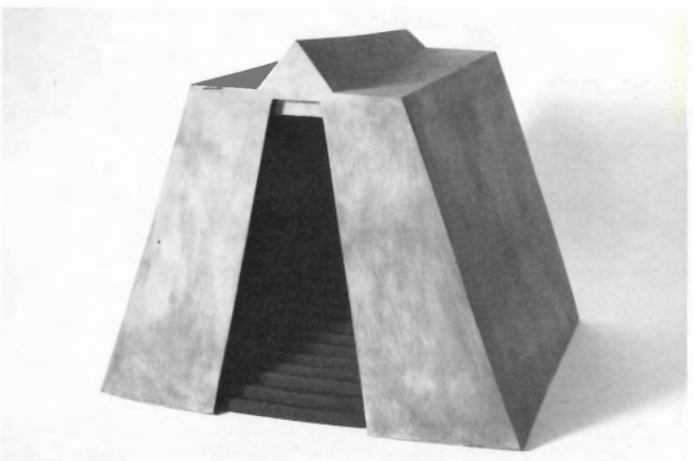
Another house form of a spiritual nature is the temple, which houses folk customs, myths, and legends. Temples are dedicated to the worship of a deity and provide the public with a place to remember events, persons, or gods. Like shrines, they can be richly ornate and elevated to encourage contemplation or to emphasize their holiness or spiritual power.

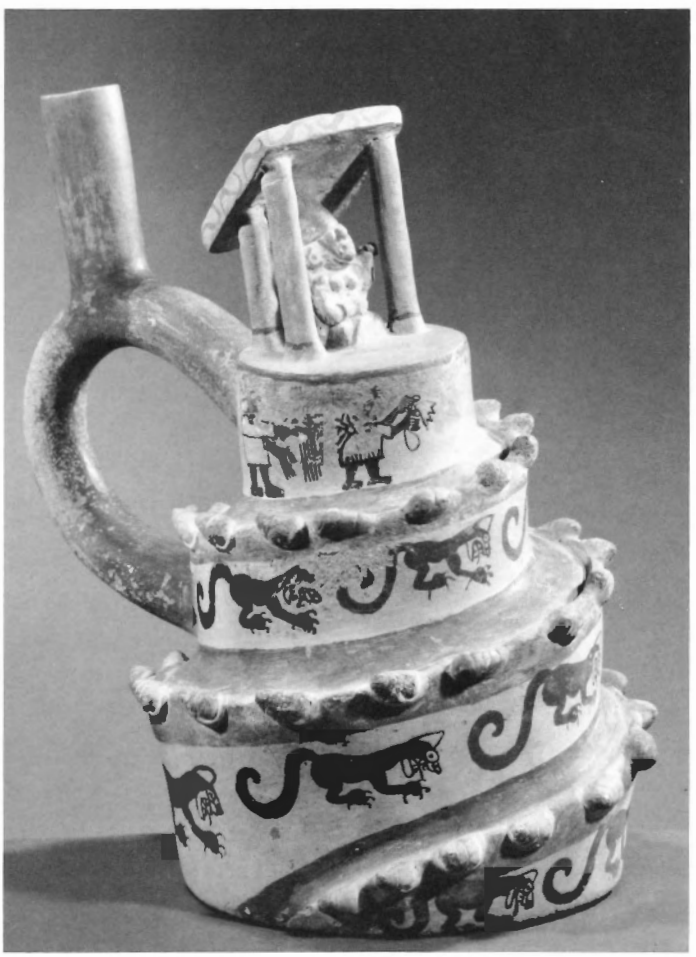


(Opposite) Monument To My Failures *(1979) by Nancy Carman, 19" x 14½" x 13½". Courtesy Helen Drutt Gallery, Philadelphia.*

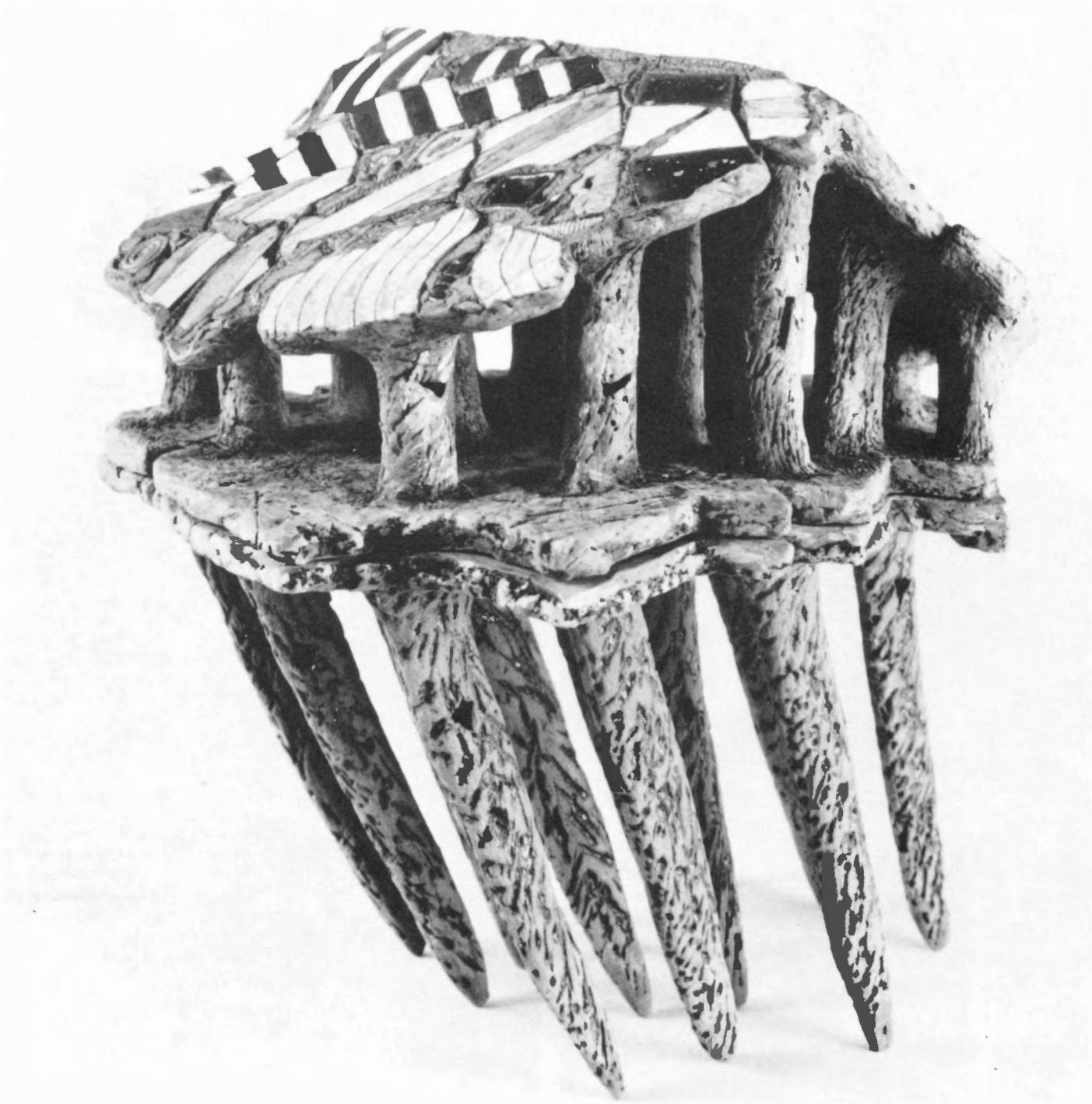
(Clockwise from top right) Temple 16 *(1978) by William Wyman, 15" x 21" x 18". Collection Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Gift of Norman and Mary Louise Meyer. Photo: Greg Heins.*
Stirrup Vessel *A.D. 200–500, late Mochica, Peru, pottery, slip paint. Collection Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, gift of Nathan Cummings, 1963.*
Island Castle *(1984) by Linda Einfalt, 54" x 30" x 7¼". Courtesy Dorothy Weiss Gallery, San Francisco. Photo: Randy Shiroma.*





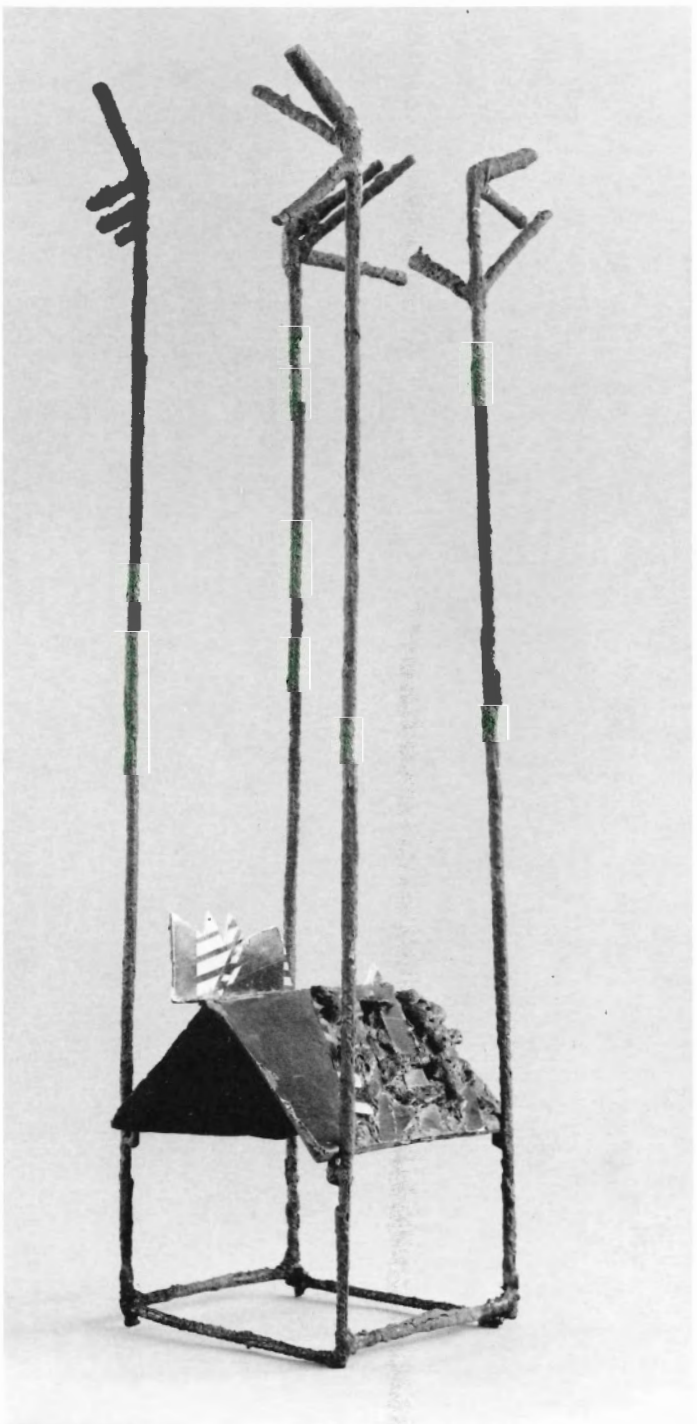


Many contemporary artists draw on the references of temples and shrines to previous religions and civilizations—in particular, to the fragments they contain of other cultures. There is also a fascination with houses that were once occupied, but now remain empty—whose rooms now hold merely the memories of former inhabitants or environments. Some, like archaeological artifacts, balance precariously between survival and decay.

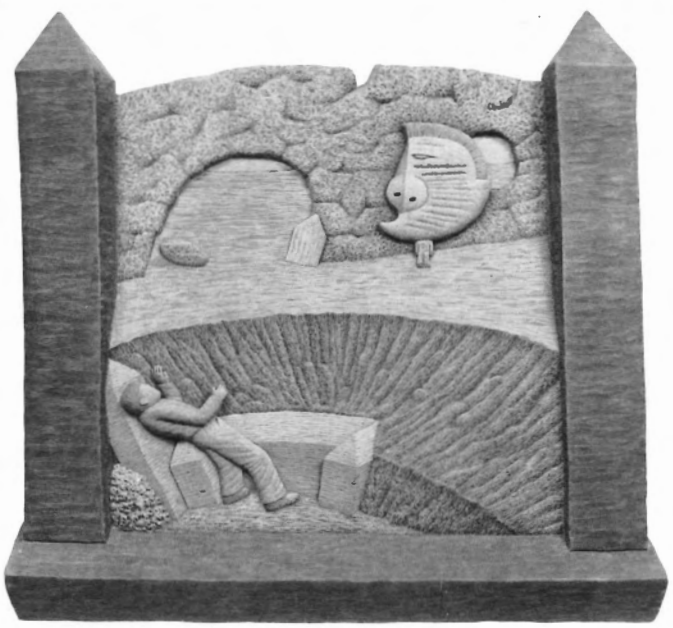


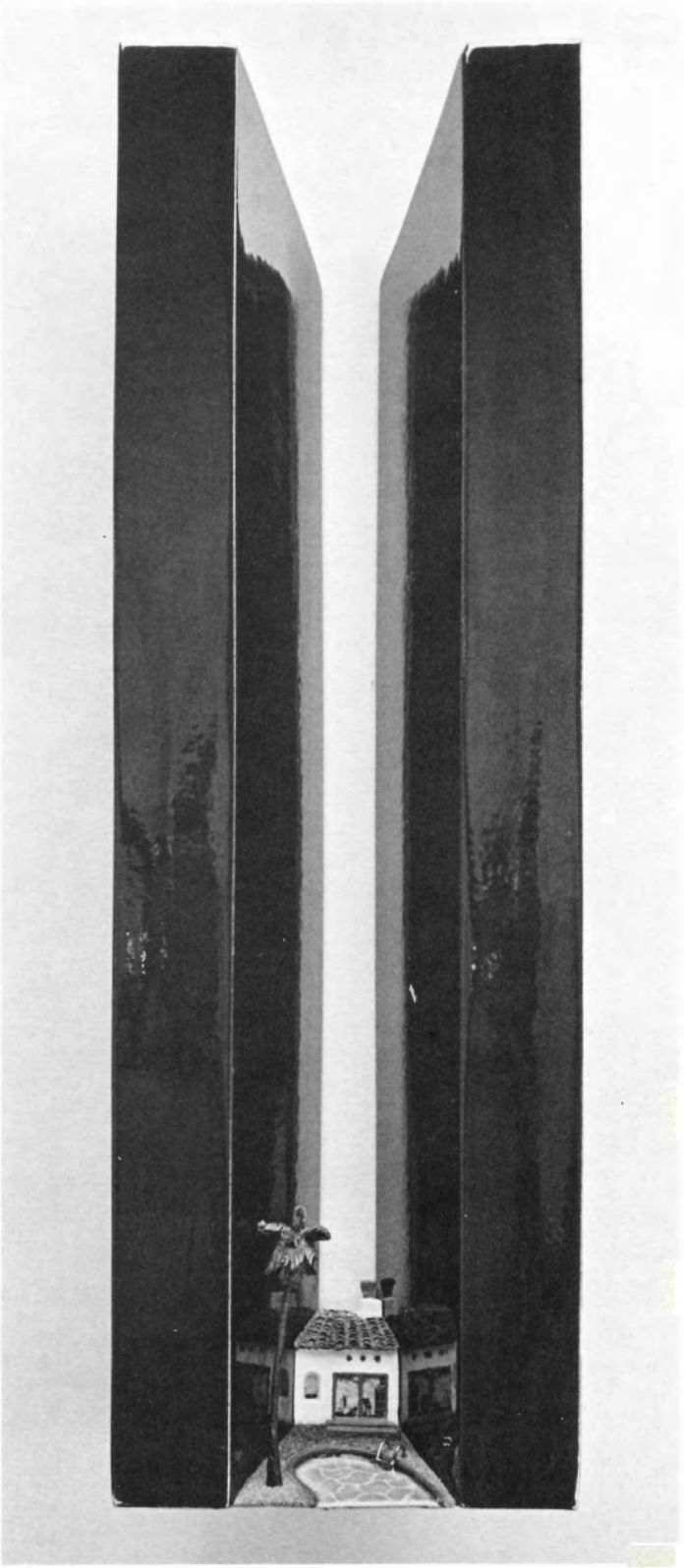
(Opposite) Precariot *(1984) by Aurore Chabot, 2l2½" x 16½" x 20". Courtesy Esther Saks Gallery, Chicago.*

(Clockwise from top right)
El Centro: Downtown *(1985) by Christopher Davis Benavides, 37½" x 35" x 20". Courtesy Esther Saks Gallery, Chicago.*
Building Façade *(1983) by Mary Jo Bole, 15" x 8" x 13", multifired earthenware. Courtesy Maria Friedrich, New York. Photo: Susie Cushner.*
Finger House *(1983) by Ron Fondaw, 48" x 12" x 14", white ware, porcelain veneers, Egyptian paste, steel. Collection Mark Cohen, Miami.*



Because houses are private spaces that provide refuge or shelter, that protect us from the cold, the hostile, and the adverse, their intimate overriding gesture, speaking metaphorically, is to nurture, to comfort. Some artists use the context of personal architecture—the associations of house with shelter, warmth, or protection—to relate personal narratives whose power often relies upon the familiarity and intimacy of the architectural setting.





(Opposite, clockwise from top left)
At the Window *(1981) by Christine Federighi, 21" x 12" x 8", terra cotta with slips/stains.*

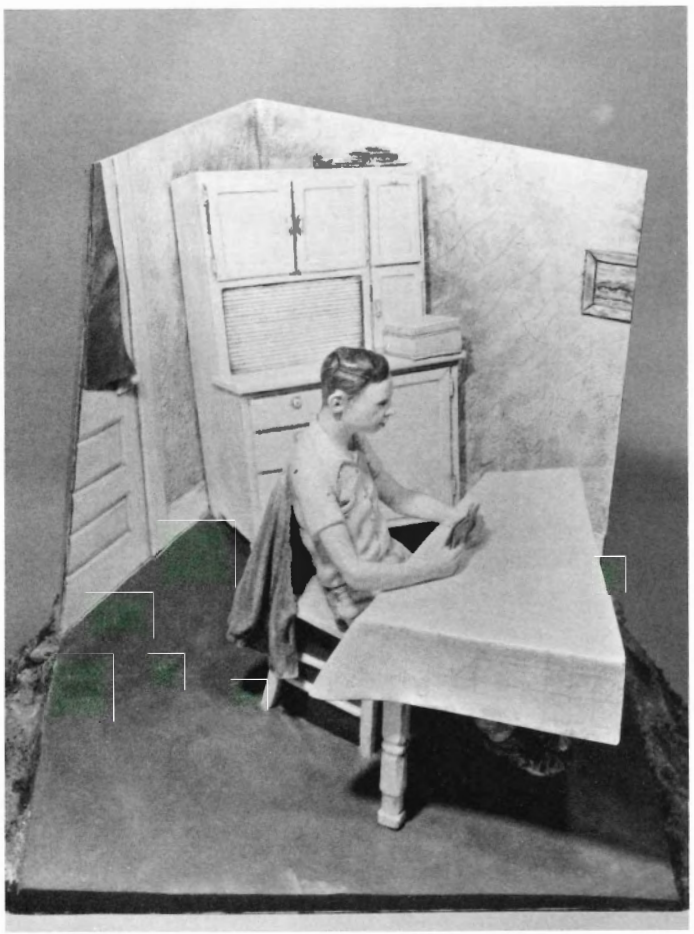
Hold Out/Then, Now and Forever *(1984) by Gifford Myers, 15" x 4¾" x 2", glaze and acrylic on ceramic. Collection Gary H. Gilbar. Courtesy O. Y. O. Studio.*

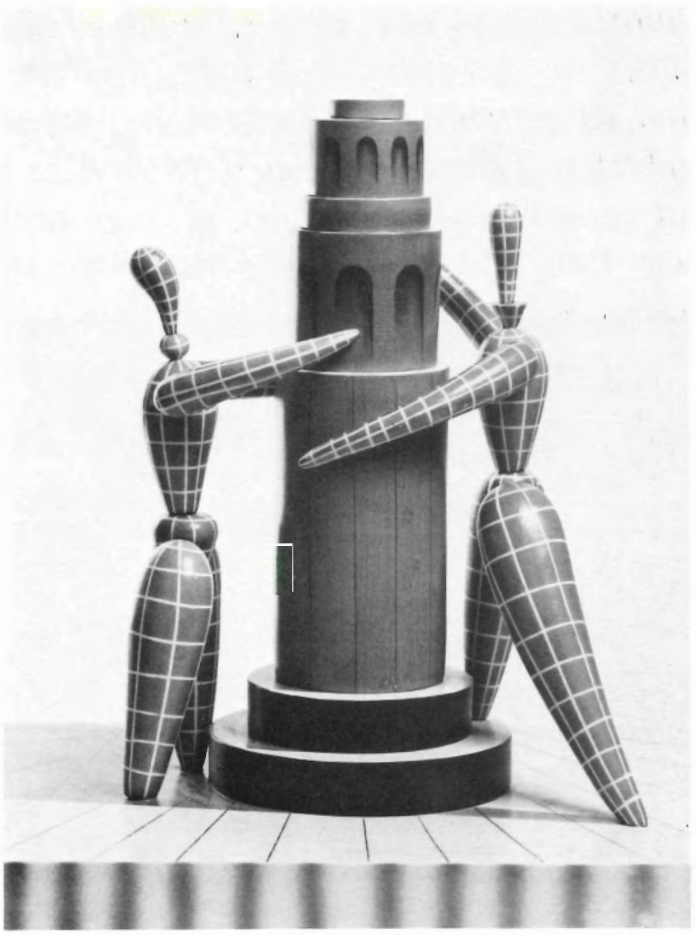
Unexpected, Unknown *(1984) by Jan Holcomb, 26" x 24" x 3".*

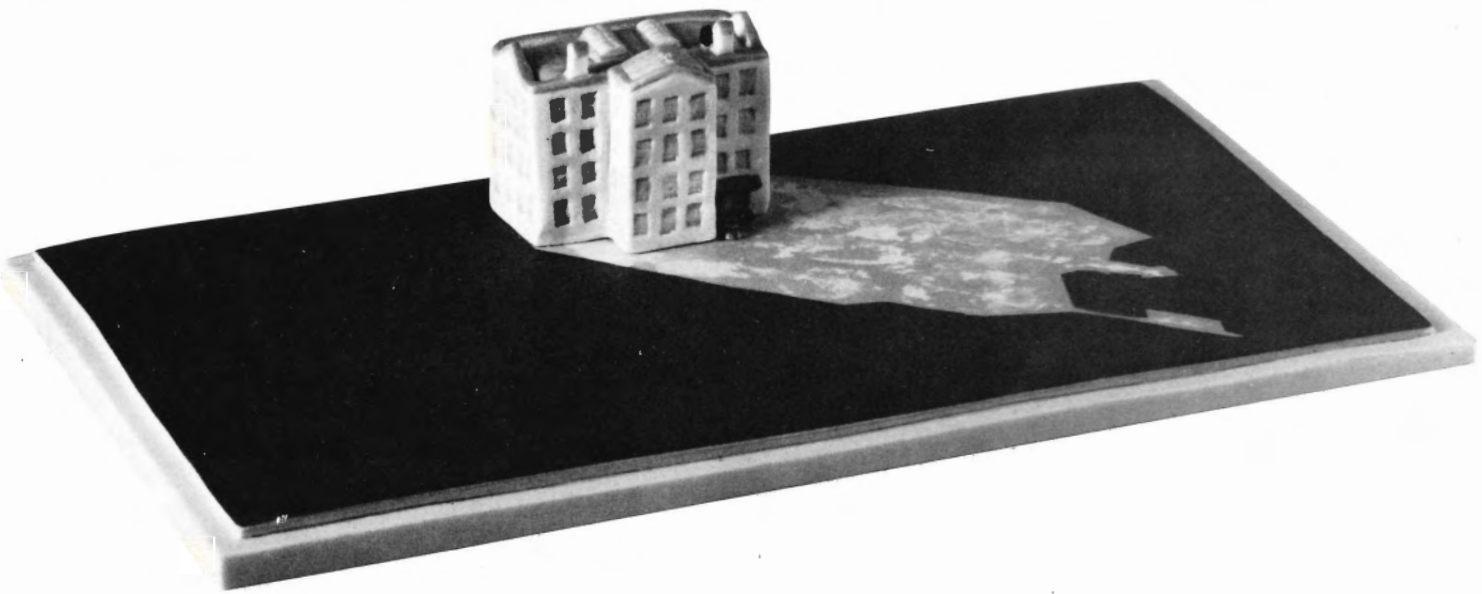
(This page, clockwise from top right)
Ménage à Trois *(1985) by Tom Rippon, 14" x 16" x 13", porcelain. Courtesy Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco. Photo: M. Lee Fatherree.*

Delivery for the Wheatena Plant, Rahway, New Jersey *(1979) by Chris Unterseher, 8" x 5" x 1½", porcelain. Courtesy Rena Bransten Gallery, San Francisco.*

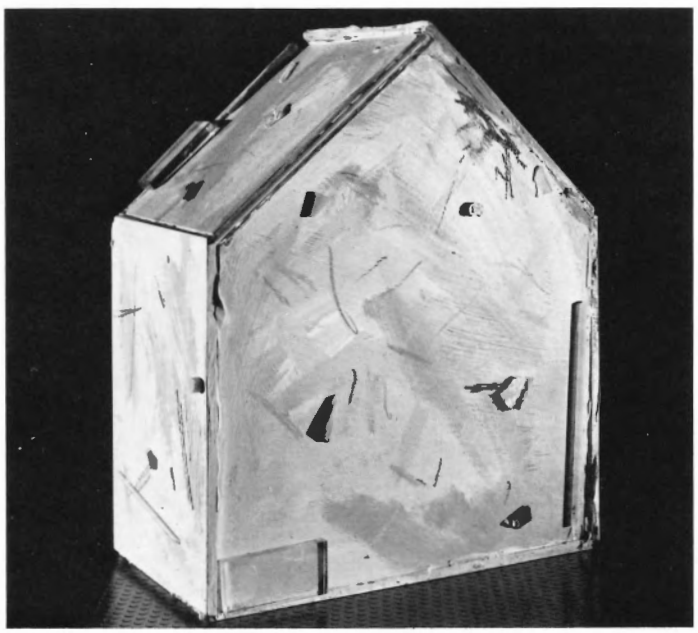
In the Book from the Kitchen *(1983) by Jack Earl, 15½" x 21" x 21", ceramic, oil, paint, glass. Collection Marcia and William Goodman. Courtesy Theo Portnoy Gallery, New York. Photo: Lee Nordness.*







But while a house is, indeed, the protective roof over our heads, it also contains the cellar—what Bachelard calls the dark entity—"which partakes of subterranean forces." It not only houses our dreams, it harbors our fears. Not surprisingly, then, many artists create ambivalent images that challenge our traditional notions of house-as- home. By presenting ambiguous architectural images as icons, these artists raise further questions about the structure, function, and emotional content of the house form. To house is to contain space, and in such a space one seeks to nest, inhabit, or reside. But many images created by today's artists provide no interior resting place. These images may have windows or doors inviting entry, but the structures themselves convey a different message. Many, in fact, have no traditional openings, but remain sealed or shut off from access. The ambiguity between volume perceived and mass expressed lends dynamism and tension to these forms.



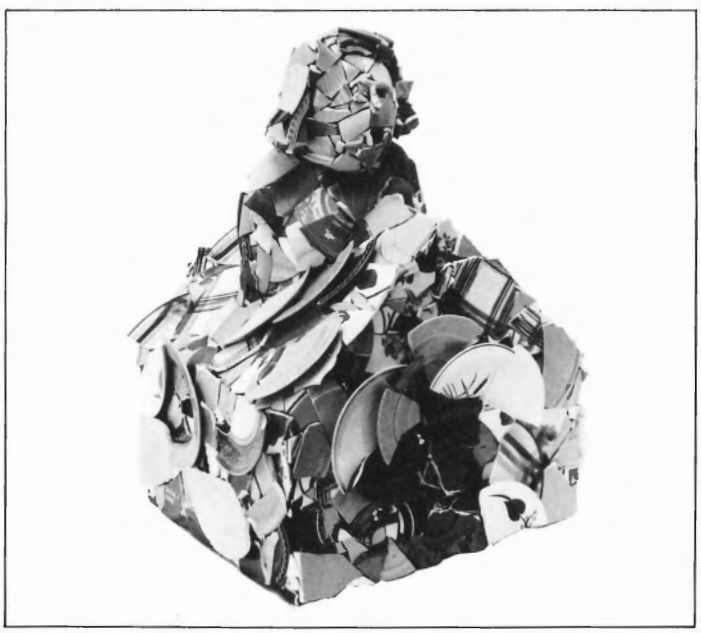
(Opposite, clockwise from top right) Ali *(1983) by Marta Walloff, 56" x 56" x 1", terra cotta, glaze. Courtesy Esther Saks Gallery, Chicago. Photo: M. Walloff.*

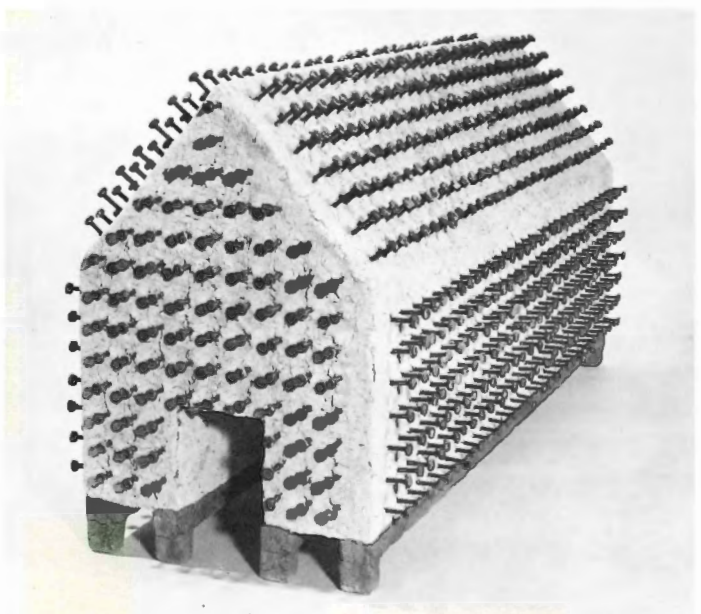
Home in Almond *(1984) by Richard Shaw, 13½" x 26" x 9", porcelain with decal overglaze. Courtesy Braunstein Gallery, San Francisco.*

Untitled *(1985) by Therman Statom, glass. Courtesy Betsy Rosenfield Gallery, Chicago.*

Burnin'and Bakin' *(1981) by Ken Little, 24" high. Collection Daniel Jacobs, New York.*

Shotgun *(1980) by Robert Lyon, 15½" x 34⅛" x 12¼", unfired clay mixed with glue, nails, acrylic paint.*





The lack of accessible interior space leaves the would-be occupants in a tenuous relationship with their environment; often the figures maintain peculiar postures within their architectural settings. Thus we find some inhabitants either too large for their homes or unable to find a comfortable resting place. They stand or sit on top, or run around the outside of the structure, never getting a chance to settle down. The houses remain unoccupied, transient, mysterious, and provocative.

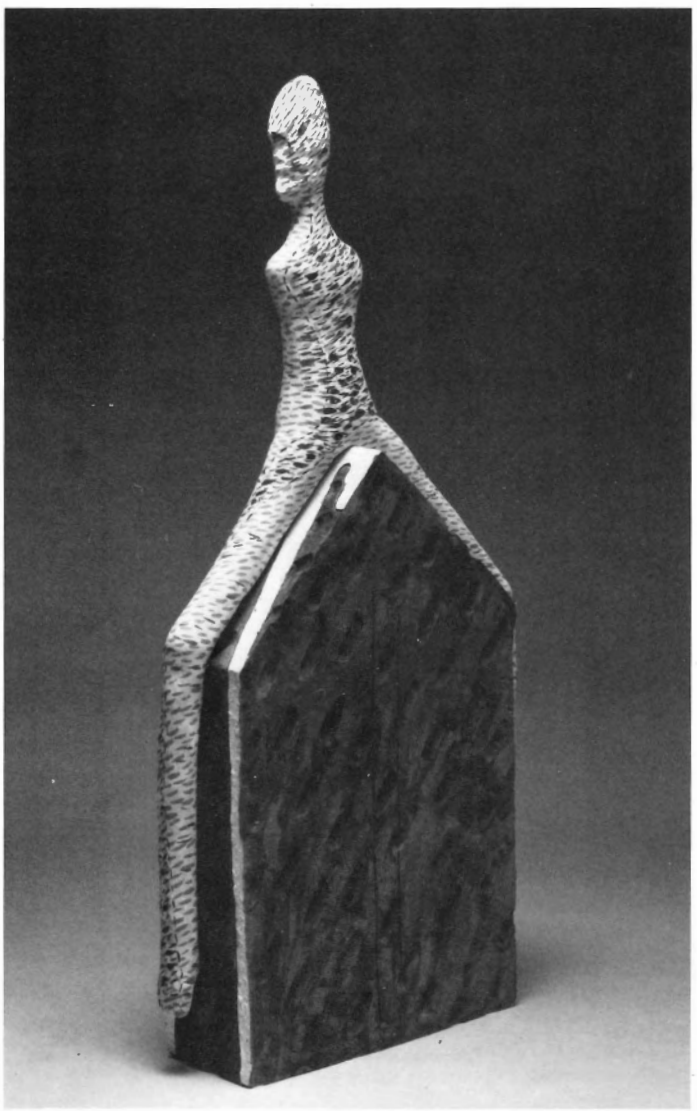
Like much contemporary art, these forms rely upon the viewer's identification with a familiar, emotion-laden image and with the artist's ability to transform that image into another type of reality. In addition to private perceptions of space, these "houses" have become metaphors for places of worship, fragments of civilization, or the memories of culture. Whether psychological portraits, fantasies, or illusions, they remain truly unique personal narratives.

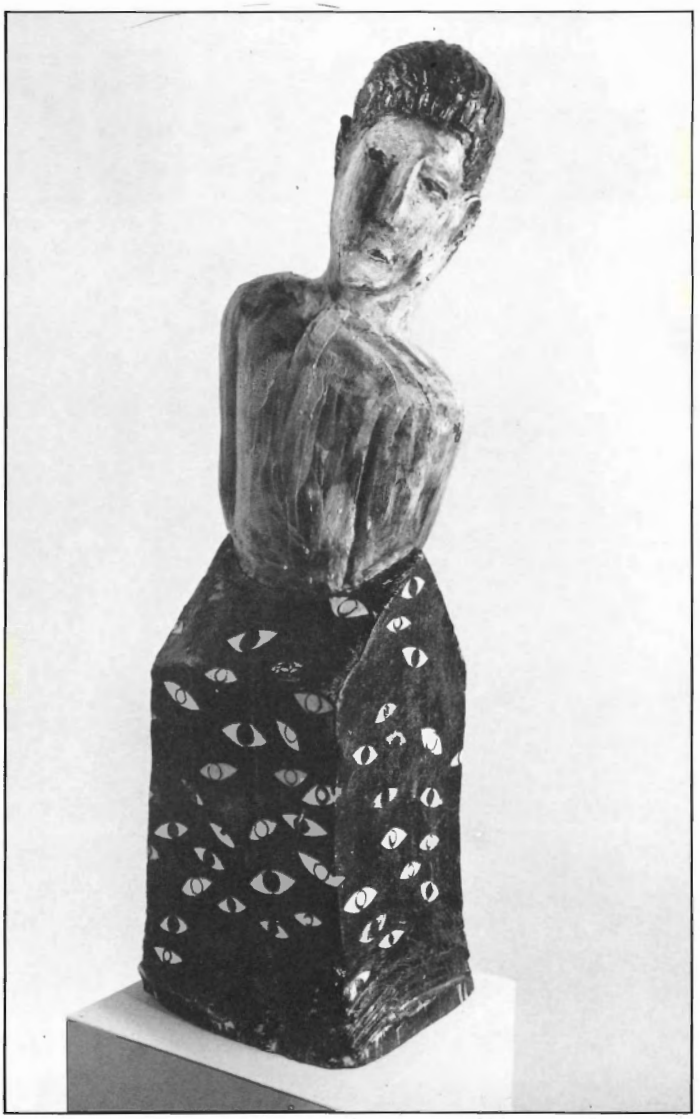
Susan Wechsler, who teaches ceramic history at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum/ Parson's decorative arts program, spent the summer as a guest lecturer in Australia. This article developed from the exhibition, "Is Anybody Home?" which Wechsler organized this past April as guest curator for the Esther Saks Gallery, Chicago. A catalogue for that show is available from the gallery, 311 West Superior, Chicago, IL 60610.

Home Island *(1984) by Michael Lucero, 26" x 27" x 23". Courtesy Charles Cowles Gallery, New York. Photo: Ellen Page Wilson.*

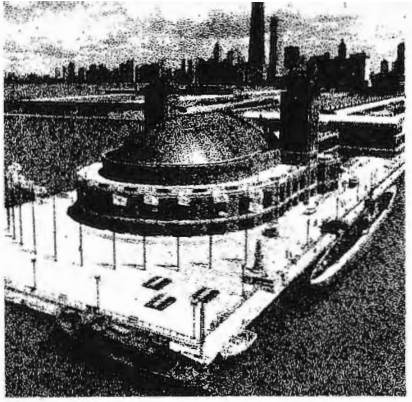
Side Rider *(1984) by Christine Federighi, 48" x 18" x 6", terra cotta with stains. Courtesy Esther Saks Gallery, Chicago. Photo: Terry Friedman.*

Untitled *(1985) by Michael Corney, 46" x 14" x 12". Courtesy Esther Saks Gallery, Chicago.*





September 18-22, 1986
Navy Pier, Chicago



CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL NEW ART FORMS EXPOSITION

An exposition of galleries featuring works in clay, glass, wood, fiber, metal and mixed media.

The Chicago International New Art Forms Exposition is a juried event. Limited space available. Application and information inquiries from galleries or fine arts dealers call or write Mark Lyman, Managing Director, Chicago International New Art Forms Exposition.

Opening Night Benefit
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5:30 p.m.-10:00 p.m.

600 North McClurg Court,
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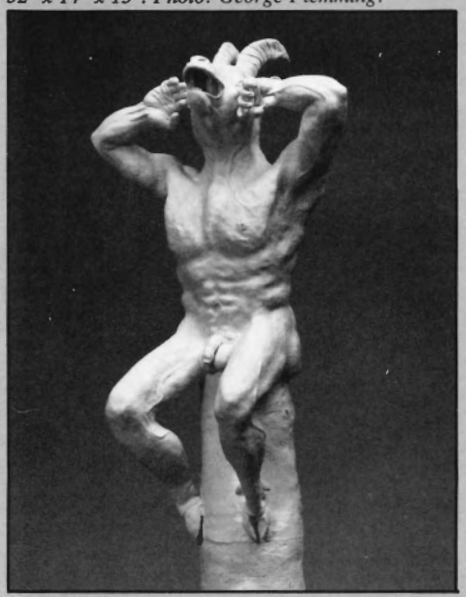
Telephone: 312.787.6858
Telex: 333427 Lakeside Group

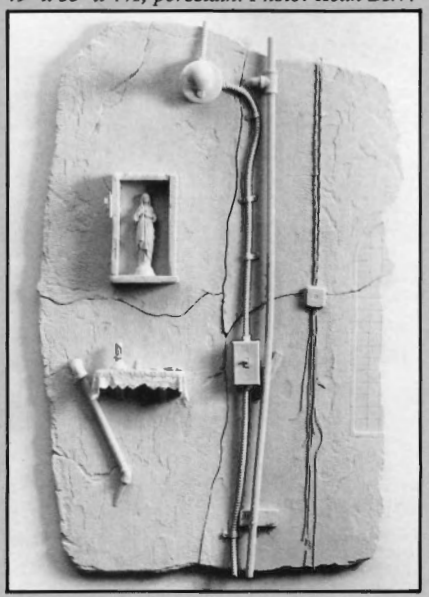
Projects of the Lakeside Group: The Chicago International Art Exposition, The Chicago International Antiques Show, The Chicago International Wooden Boat Festival, The Chicago International Sailboat Show, The Chicago International Flower and Garden Show

Frank Fleming S. Judson Wilcox

Frank Fleming, Screamer Goat #1 *(1982–84)*, *52" x 14" x 15". Photo: George Flemming.*



S. Judson Wilcox, Basement Madonna *(1984)*, *49" x 33" x 4½, porcelain. Photo: Keith Berr.*



Two Approaches to Realism in Clay
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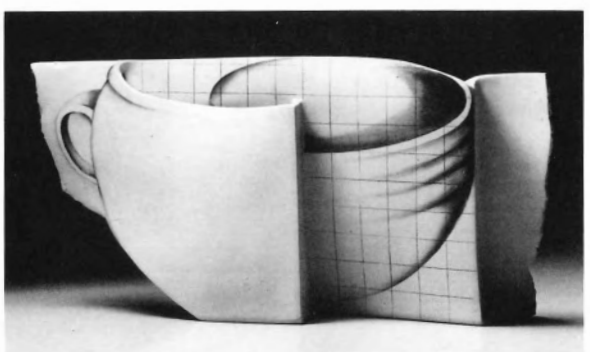

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212/242-4106

Trish Adams
Torsos
November 5–30, 1985

ClarkGallery

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617 259 8303

Torso (1985), 33" x 18" x 12", ceramic.
Photo: Eric Shambroom.

BRITISH POTTERY '85/86

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November 22—January 4

Opening Reception
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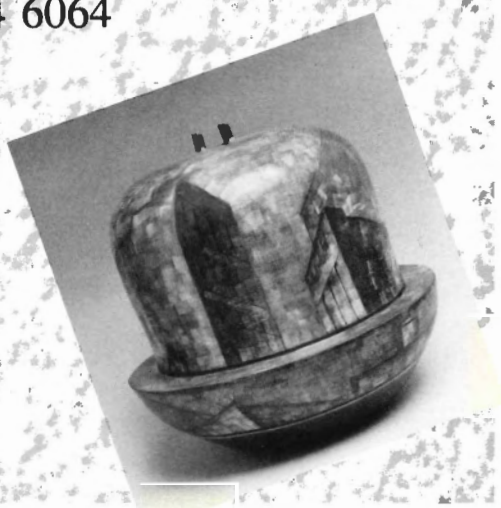
Lidya Buzio: Recent Work
November 8, 1985–
January 5, 1986

Everson Museum of Art
401 Harrison Street
Community Plaza
Syracuse, NY 13202
315 474 6064



Jack Troy
The Fire as Decoration—
Stoneware and Porcelain
November 18–December 26

Clay for Collectors IV
December 30–February 6

The Clay Place
5600 Walnut Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15232
Telephone: 412 441 3799

National Craft Invitational
December 5–January 18

•

Gala Opening
December 5, 1985
5–7:30 pm

•

David Bachrach
Leslie Bowman
Curtiss Brock
John Fox
Sid Garrison
Demitri Gerakaris
Alexa Grace
George Handy
Lois Hennessey
Suzanne Hubbard
Mark Lindquist
Melvin Lindquist
Harrison McIntosh
Bernard Mattox
Bradley Miller
Francine Ozereka
Chris Richard
Hap Sakwa
Claire Sanford
John Shaw
Paul Soldner
Dennis Stewart

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G.H. Dalsheimer Gallery
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Baltimore, MD 21201
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National Clay Show

April 11–May 11, 1986

Jurors:
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William Hunt
Martha Schneider

A.R.T. Gallery
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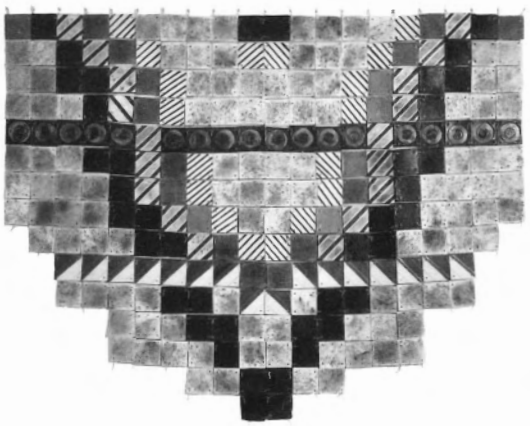
Entry deadline: February 1, 1986.
For prospectus, write to:
Sam Rosby, Gallery Director



African Landscape, 58" x 78"

Alexandra Kochman
Clay Sculpture

November 15, 1985–January 17, 1986

Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art
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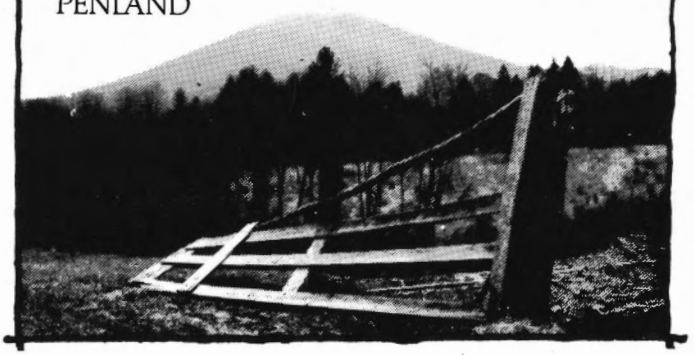

RADFORD UNIVERSITY

CLAY USA '86

CLAY, USA '86 is a national ceramic art exhibition scheduled for Feb. 28-March 16, 1986 in Radford University's Art Gallery. Sponsored by Radford University's College of Visual and Performing Arts, CLAY, USA '86 offers $1,000 in awards as designated by the juror PAULA WINOKUR, professor of ceramics at Beaver College, Glenside, Penn.

Calendar:

Deadline for slide entries	Jan 17
Notification of work acceptance	Feb 7
Deadline to submit works for final jurying	Feb 20
Final jurying	Feb 27
Opening reception	Feb 28
National ceramic art exhibition	Feb 28-Mar 16

To obtain a prospectus, write: Clay USA '86, Box 5791, Radford University, VA 24142

David Shaner Workshop

March 7–9, 1986

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Dallas, Texas 75230
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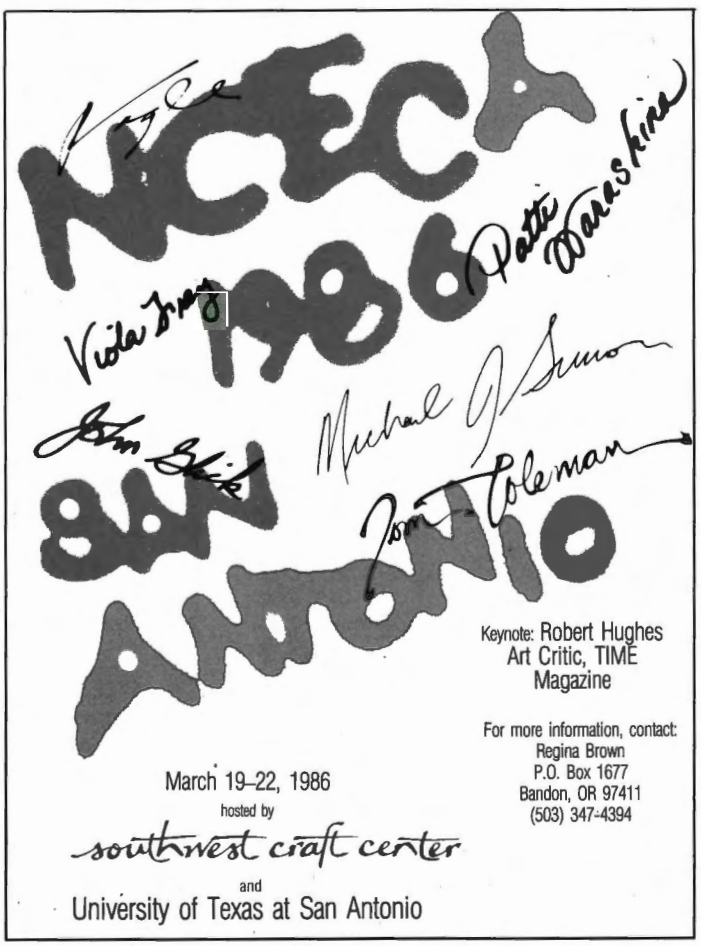

Apr. 85-1 tall colorful cylinder, round bottom, gold interior. 16½" h.
photo: Herbert Lotz

RICK DILLINGHAM

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NOV. 9 – DEC. 11, 1985

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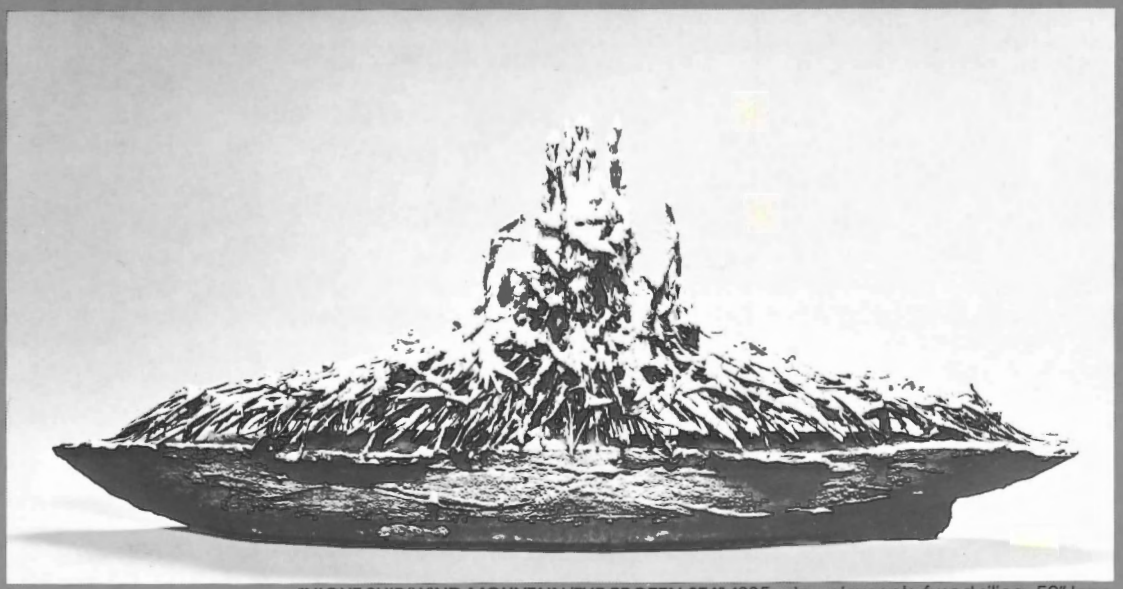
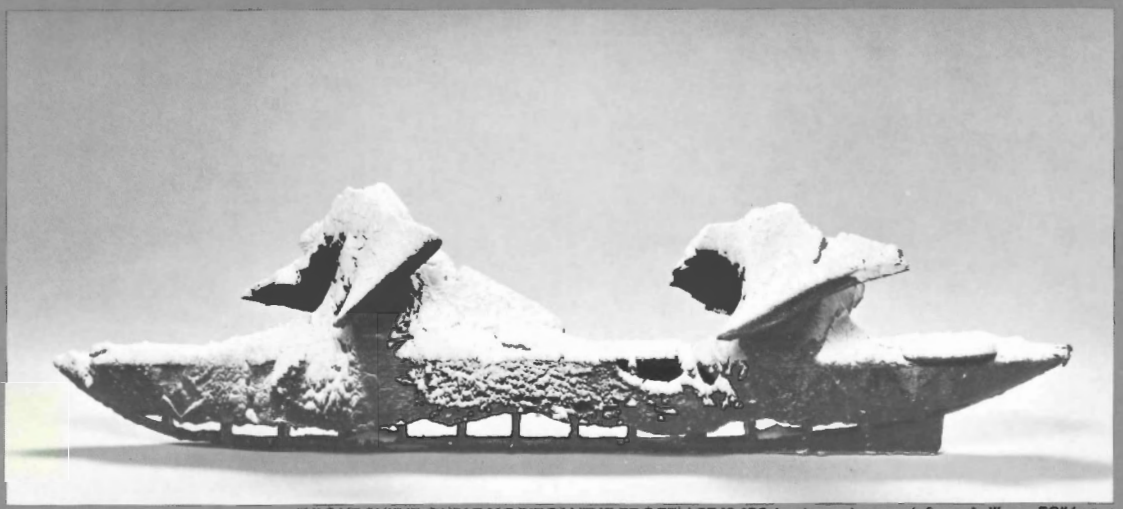


"NIGHT SHIP/WIND MOUNTAIN/THE FROZEN SEA" 1985 clay, pigments, fused silica 50" long



"NIGHT SHIP/DOUBLE HORIZON/THE FROZEN SEA" 1984 clay, pigment, fused silica 50" long

"NIGHT SHIP/DARK GARDEN/THE FROZEN SEA" 1985 clay, pigments, fused silica 50" long

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